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<u>COMING EVENTS</u> <u>December-January</u>			
			<u>Leader</u>
Dec 13	Natural Tunnel State Park, VA	C/3/B	423-229-6244
Dec 19-21	Backpack AT: Elk Garden to Damascus	AA/2/A	423-963-8654
Dec 27	Buffalo Mountain Park, Johnson City	B/3/C	423-753-7263

For an explanation of the ratings, see [Schedule](#)



Election Results

Jake Mitchell reporting

The elections for the new leaders of our country and hiking club are complete and the results are in. With an overwhelming voter turnout that doubled last year's, three new Steering Committee members were selected to serve for the next two years. **Congratulations to Marc Schurger, Steve Perri and Chad Tate!** We greatly appreciate the efforts of our outgoing committee members – Dale Douthat, Paul Worsham and Michael Watts. Next time you see them, pat them on the back and say thank you.

If you have ideas for 2009 events or programs, please contact a member of the leadership team. They will be working to identify the 2009 key initiatives in January.

Fall Dinner Meeting

Tim Schaefer Reporting

TEHCC held its annual Fall Dinner Meeting at the Eastman Lodge on Saturday, November

15th, with ninety-two people attending! Richard Siggins' beautiful slide show and Paul Worsham's excellent selection of beers and wines made the social hour very enjoyable and created great discussion points. Troutdale again did an excellent job keeping everyone fed and I'm sure I'm not the only one who had more than one slice of pie.

The presentations began with Ed Montgomery thanking everyone for their hard work to make our dinner meetings possible. He also thanked our outgoing steering team members, Michael Watts, Paul Worsham, and Dale Douthat. Ed welcomed our new steering team members, Marc Schurger, Chad Tate, and Stever Perri, and introduced Jake Mitchell as our new steering team chair. We are also welcoming two new officers to the club, Judy Allen as our membership coordinator, and Jamie Aiello as our events coordinator. A special thanks goes to Mountain Sports LTD for providing a gear display and supplying door prizes to randomly selected individuals.

Our club was extremely excited to award another one of our own with a plaque for hiking the entire AT. June Donaldson has been hiking the Trail over the last five years and finally made it happen, completing the AT this summer.



The Wilsons with June Donaldson as she received her award.

Next we recognized the hard work of our trail maintenance volunteers, acknowledging nearly 11,000 volunteer hours with no injuries or incidents, performing needed service to our local trail systems. Special recognition was given to the four who have joined the 1000-volunteer-hours club, Mike Hupko, Jim Foster, Steve Banks, and C. B. Willis.

After some door prize awards, Leanna Joyner's reminded everyone of the importance of

signing up for an AT license plate. A similar program in North Carolina has been extremely successful in providing well needed funds to the AT. We would love to have a similar story for Tennessee. So if you haven't signed up yet, please don't wait, and if you already have, please encourage others. Remember that you don't have to wait to renew your tags to sign up.

After the last door prize, Stuart Everett made everyone jealous of his amazing 16-day, 225-mile trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon on a private excursion with his wife and 14 other individuals. Stuart showed amazing photos and videos of every day of his trip. These included not only paddling, but also several wonderful hikes that are only possible by floating to the trail heads. Stuart's photos and stories were very enjoyable, well worth the wait.

TERC Membership Card Required for Mahoney's Discount

Reported by Vic Hasler, Rental Equipment Coordinator,

While I was purchasing two backpacks for the club's rental equipment, the owner of Mahoney's stated that effective December 1, 2008, a club identification card is required to use the 10% discount on camping/hiking gear and footwear. This store policy is effective for all outdoor groups, as their discount has been abused in recent years. For TEHCC members, the Eastman Recreation Club membership card with group 08 (Hiking and Canoeing) listed is sufficient. TEHCC leadership will be considering alternatives for Program Affiliates; we might issue a separate membership card or provide Mahoney's with a membership list.



Free Gift Idea!

Jake Mitchell Reporting

The idea is free. Not the gift.

With the economy in the ditch, we are all thinking about how to get the most bang for our buck when giving gifts. How about a gift that not only makes your hiking family member smile, but also supports a worthy cause? You guessed it - a Tennessee Appalachian Trail license plate. I can hear the responses now. "Baby, thank you so much. This is way better than socks." "Honey, I would say you shouldn't have, but you should have!" "This is awesome. I think this is the most unique gift I have ever received." It's really easy to give one. Fill out the application ([Application-TennPlate.pdf](#)) on behalf of the recipient, write a check for \$35 and stick it in an envelope pre-addressed to the ATC. Voila! Instant gift. If you really want to go over the top, you can put a candy cane name tag and a Santa sticker on the envelope. Don't be a scrooge, buy or give a license plate and help the Trail.

Scheduled Hiking, Paddling, and Trail Maintenance

Opportunities

For an explanation of the ratings, see either [Hiking Schedule](#) or [Paddling Schedule](#).

Natural Tunnel State Park, VA, December 13, 2008

Leader: , 423-229-6244

Rating: C/3/B

A few times this year I've done an unofficial "Dad's day out" hike with my 2-year-old daughter and a friend and his two kids, giving our respective wives a break. This hike is to make it more official and invite others to join us, as I hope to make this a bimonthly event. You don't have to be a dad, and you don't have to bring kids, but adjust your expectations accordingly. We'll be doing short trips on easy to moderate terrain; I'll also have a backpack for when my daughter tires of walking. On this trip, we'll explore the park and do a few miles of trails with a stop for snacks or lunch along the way. We plan to leave the meeting place at 9am and be back by 2-3pm in time for (late) naps. We'll meet at the Greenbelt parking area near Pet-Smart, East Stone Commons at Eastman Road and Stone Drive. Call or email Tim Schaefer if you're interested in joining us so we know to look for you.

Elk Garden to Damascus, December 19 - 20, 2008

Leader: , 423-963-8654

Rating: AA/2/B

Jake Mitchell will lead a pre-Christmas hike on the Appalachian Trail from Elk Garden, VA to Damascus, VA. The total distance is 24 miles. We will leave Kingsport around noon on Friday and return Saturday evening. Weather should be brisk so low degree sleeping bags will be a necessity. We will pass by two shelters and the Creeper Trail, along with skirting Whitetop Mountain. If you are interested, contact Jake.

Buffalo Mountain Park, Johnson City, December 27, 2008

Leader: , 423-753-7263

Rating: B/3/C

In early May, a wildfire roared through parts of Buffalo Mountain, the origin of which is still unknown. National Forest firefighters reported flames up to 100' high. The fire was intensified by numerous dead pines on the steep southern and western slopes and high, shifting winds from that direction. Most of the western portion of Buffalo Mountain Park, hundreds of acres altogether, was badly burned. The park was closed for two months while burned tree boles were removed along the trails by expert sawyers. Nature is quickly restoring vegetation to the burned areas; many sassafras, oaks, and, unfortunately, quite a few greenbriars. One "benefit" for hikers, though, is the opening of some impressive views to the north. Walking through the burned area provides a feeling of the forces of nature.

We'll make a loop of around 5 miles within the park and walk off Christmas dinner. We'll ascend along the White Rock Trail, in the unburned eastern side of the park, to the White Rock Cliffs and their great views. From there we'll traverse the main ridge of Buffalo Mountain into the burned area and the high point of the park, Tip Top (3300'). Then we'll descend Stairstep Ridge into the most badly burned areas. The Buffalo Mountain trails have some level areas, but also some short, steep stretches. We'll take our time and enjoy the outing, which is suitable for older children. The primary meeting point for the hike will be Parkway Discount Wine & Liquor

on Roan Street in South Johnson City at 10:00 AM. A Boones Creek meeting location can be arranged upon request. The hike is subject to postponement if the weather is bad, so please contact Joe ahead of time so you can be so notified.

For the Record, Activity and Trip Reports

Devil's Backbone and Fall Creek Loop, November 22, 2008

Jake Mitchell reporting

Jake Mitchell enjoyed a nice afternoon hike along the Devil's Backbone and Fall Creek Loop Trails at Warriors Path, by himself. No one else wanted to brave the not-so-cold weather for some good exercise. Even though the morning temps were in the 20s, the afternoon brought temps in the 40s along with clear views of the surrounding hills. For those who have never hiked this trail, here is a short description: The trail starts from the 17th tee box at Warriors Path Golf Course located just across the bridge over Patrick Henry Lake in Kingsport. The trail steadily climbs from #17 to the 5th tee box which has a bench facing across the lake toward Duck Island, I-81, and beyond. From there, the trail dips down to the 4th green and back up to another great lookout point. The trail then descends to lake level where Fall Creek enters the lake. Fall Creek Loop begins here and makes its way through short vegetation to the summit of a small hill before passing the road entrance behind Warrior Falls subdivision and returning to the Devil's Backbone Trail. Now do Devil's Backbone backwards. The climb back up to the 5th tee box is a strenuous one for those not physically prepared. Average hikers can do this in two hours or less.



A.T. Section Maintenance and Special Project Reports (*Past*)

Reporting: Joe DeLoach

Date: October 22, 2008

Purpose: Open Areas Meeting

Location: Watauga Ranger District offices in Unicoi

People: Joe DeLoach

Summary: Annually, we review plans with the Forest Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Carolina Mountain Club, and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, for maintaining open areas along the AT north of the Smokies. Joe McGuiness and Marsha Carter have this responsibility in the North Zone of the Cherokee NF. In fiscal year 2009, more effort will be placed on mowing Hump Mountain and potentially in the Bradley Gap area. Also, improved access for grazing is sought. We stated that these are higher priority than mowing the fields across the Elk River from the AT. The route to Doll Flats has become more difficult to navigate and could impact management of the open area there. We suggested that access from Shell Creek be investigated.

Reporting: Joe DeLoach

Date: October 22, 2008

Purpose: Semiannual AT Partnership Meeting

Location: Watauga Ranger District office in Unicoi

People: Bruce Cunningham, Joe DeLoach, Carl Fritz, Ed Oliver, and Bob Peoples

Summary: Twice yearly, we meet with representatives from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Forest Service to discuss Appalachian Trail management. In the Forest Service's 2007-8 fiscal year, TEHCC opened relocations between 19E and Bishop Hollow, Weedy Gap to Unaka Mountain (with a short one remaining near Cherry Gap), on the shoulder of Grassy Ridge, and near Bradley Gap. Altogether we've built nearly 3 miles of new Trail this year. During the fiscal year, we've spent 10,785 hours on AT maintenance, about 80% on these major projects. Major project plans for the remainder of 2008 and in upcoming years were reviewed, with hopes that a project north of Wilbur Dam Road will be approved by May 2009. The Forest Service plans to install signs at most of the AT road crossings in the TEHCC section in 2009. We reviewed side trails, with the Forest Service asking us to remove a few unofficial or soon-to-be delisted trails from our maps. We plan to install cables for hanging food away from bears at No Business Knob Shelter using designs and materials recommended by the Carolina Mountain Club. Our next meeting is on March 18.

Reporting: Old Timers Hiking Club

Date: October 31, 2008

Purpose: Close off the spring at Beauty Spot Gap

Location: Section 18, Indian Grave Gap to Beauty Spot Gap spring

People: Mike Hupko, Marsha Hupko

Summary: Mike and Marsha lopped small trees growing in or near the trail, removed small limbs hanging in the trail, and removed several small stumps in the trail. They cleaned out several water bars, removed water signs and blue blazes at the Beauty Spot Gap spring, and picked up trash along trail. This trip resulted from a hiker report that the water at the spring was bad. We took advantage of the trip to check trail and do minor treadway repair. We passed seven southbound through hikers and one section hiker. The hikers who stayed at Cherry Gap Shelter reported the water supply was down; it took 10 minutes to get a liter of water. They said the trail was clear of blowdowns.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: October 31, 2008

Purpose: Assess trees and shrubs near AT

Location: Section 14b, Round Bald to Carvers Gap

People: Ed Oliver

Summary: Over the long term, the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy hopes to remove more trees and shrubs from Round Bald to more closely simulate the balds of decades ago and encourage other plant species. Ed met with representatives from SAHC and the Forest Service to discuss possible strategies and the impact on the AT.

Reporting: Bill Berry

Date: November 1, 2008

Purpose: Clear trees from trail and check trail condition

Location: Section 20b, Spivey Gap to No Business Shelter

People: Bill Berry

Summary: The Trail is in good condition from Spivey Gap to No Business Shelter.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: November 4, 2008

Purpose: Dig Trail relocation

Location: Section 14a, 1 mile south of Yellow Mountain Gap

People: Paul Benfield, Ken Buchanan, Bruce Cunningham, Mary Cunningham, Dave Dunham, Bill Elderbrock, Carl Fritz, Mike Hupko, Ed Oliver, Bob Peoples, Tim Stewart, HIKERS Dan Stearns, Sheila Reiser

Summary: We had a great day to dig another 440 feet of trail. We completed the relocation, but it will not be opened until mid 2009 to allow the soft soil to settle. We tested new rogue hoes, purchased from a contribution to TEHCC. We found them to be very effective in these soil conditions. We had a great turn out on this election day. One vehicle was so packed with folks that those in the back seat could not unfasten their seat belts. Knives and loppers were considered to remedy the situation.

Reporting: Joe DeLoach

Date: November 6, 2008

Purpose: Rehab Trail

Location: Section 5, Midway between Hwy 91 and Iron Mountain Shelter

People: Craig DeLoach, Joe DeLoach, and Kat Johnson

Summary: We redug a section close to 100 feet long which had sloughed badly. We also replaced the shelter logbook, removed a few small blowdowns, and cut a few briars. Some wire mesh on one of the bog bridges has rolled up. We'll go back and either nail it down or cut it off.

Reporting: Joe DeLoach

Date: November 7 and 8, 2008

Purpose: Chainsaw Certification Classroom Session

Location: Watauga Ranger District office and The Laurels picnic area

People: Steve Banks, Paul Benfield, Joe DeLoach, Harry Ford, Mike Hupko, Jake Mitchell, and John Willis

Summary: Dennis Helton, National Forest retiree, and Steve Shepard, Camp Lejeune forestry instructor, provided excellent chainsaw instruction. The first day was classroom instruction; the second day involved field work. Hope we all passed!

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: November 11, 2008

Purpose: Dig Trail relocation

Location: Section 14a, 1 mile south of Yellow Mountain Gap

People: Paul Benfield, Carl Fritz, Ed Oliver, Bob Peoples

Summary: We dug only 90 feet of trail, but all of it was at a tricky switchback on top of large rocks. It was cool, but still great weather for digging trail.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: November 19, 2008

Purpose: Dig Trail relocation

Location: Section 1, South of Damascus

People: Paul Benfield, Ken Buchanan, Jim Foster, Carl Fritz, Ed Oliver, Bob Peoples, Tim Stewart, HIKERS Elizabeth Zane, Maria Dickinson, Devon Parish, Derek Harris, Rick Carbonell

Summary: On a very cool day we completed a 260-foot section of sidehill trail. The five south bounders added enthusiasm and were proud of their earned patch. They also got to paint their first blazes as we opened this section. Completing this section put us over three miles of sidehill trail dug this calendar year.

Reporting: Carl Fritz

Date: November 22, 2008

Purpose: Remove Blowdowns

Location: Section 19, Curley Maple Gap Shelter to Nolichukey River

People: Bruce Cunningham, Jim Foster, Carl Fritz

Summary: A hiker reported blowdowns last week. We cut about five blowdowns between Curley Maple Gap Shelter and Chestoa. Within the last several days someone had axed some 5-inch branches to improve passage at the worst blowdowns. All were easy to remove with a chainsaw.