



December 2018

THE KEYSTONE HIKER

Preserving Pennsylvania's Footpaths since 1956

Contact us: 46 E Main St, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 / 717-766-9690 / ktaadmin@kta-hike.org

Member's Corner



Winding Down

November was a busy month for KTA, we ventured to Gettysburg (battlefield photo to the left) and had a Slackpack program on the Black Forest Trail! A member shares her experience down below!

Send us your photos at ktaadmin@kta-hike.org!

KTA Slackpack Black Forest Trail - October 26-29, 2018

As told by Sarah Patterson

When I first read about KTA slackpacks, it took me awhile to grasp the concept: with coordinated efforts, the hikers are dropped off, guided in a small group, picked up at a predetermined point, shuttled back to warm food and lodgings, rest and repeat! The great part is being able to focus on the experience and not having to carry a heavy pack and all that entails (setting up camp, etc.). For a hiker like myself with little backpacking experience, but a strong desire to hike the BFT in its entirety (43 miles), it is a perfect solution.

It is the second time I have done the BFT slackpack with KTA and I feel fortunate to have completed it in both the spring and fall.

DAY ONE

Our group of five hikers met at the Pettecote Junction Campground in Cedar Run on the afternoon of October 26. Joe Neville was there to organize cabins, shuttling, do the cooking, and make sure all ran smoothly. Our leader for that day was Bob Merrill. His knowledge of trees and flora was a fascinating bonus to the beautiful scenery.

We were treated to the first of many vistas on the BFT that day. Weather and spirits were good for the for the approximately 6 mile warm-up hike.



DAY TWO

The weather can only be described as gnarly for Saturday. It rained steadily for the majority of the day, with highs hovering in the 40s. Mary Ladish lead us and kept us moving forward for this 8 a.m.-4 p.m. slog. Her positive outlook instilled in us a hopefulness that we could get through. There were some moments of delight: the Algerine Wild Area, the cascading water down a flow of rocks, and the sign that read 4.8 miles, which was the distance to the meeting point with Joe! We all opted to keep our boots on for the major water crossing. The cabins were warm and being able to take a hot shower made life worth living!



DAY THREE

Wanda Shirk joined us at 7:30 a.m. to lead us on the day that involved three serious hill climbs. Fortunately, there was only a sprinkling of rain, and amazingly the only other person we saw on the trail all four days -- a trail runner blasted out of nowhere as we were enjoying lunch on Hemlock Hill.

There were many breath-taking vistas, which made the climbing well worth it.

DAY FOUR

Wanda led us on the final day as well. This day was strategically scheduled to be less challenging than days two and three, hill-wise, but there were 31 stream crossings (we made a game of keeping count of them). Wanda set the bar high, moving quickly through the streams. She also pointed out interesting highlights along the trail: notably the North and South Link Trails and also trail maintenance techniques / blazing. More than once she burst into song.

The slackpack method is a fantastic way to tackle longer trails for those who lack backpacking experience. The hike volunteers were seasoned, patient, and each a trove of information in their own way.

Thanks to Joe's logistics this made, yet again, a great experience for this hiker.

Gifts with KTA

Unsure what to give your fellow nature-loving family members or friends this holiday season? KTA has a few solutions! Consider treating them to a [gift membership](#), a gift that will share the beautiful trails of Pennsylvania with them and all the warmth that KTA has to offer. They will be able to participate in events up until October 2019. Patches and hats from our [bookstore](#) also make wonderful stocking stuffers!

Call or [email](#) with any questions!

VOLUNTEER/MAINTAINER'S CORNER

Short notice “Flash Crew” Clears Old Loggers Path of Blowdowns

A KTA Trail Care “flash crew” spent two days clearing obstructions from the Old Loggers Path and the nearby Hawkeye Ski and Sand Spring Trails. The catalyst for this unscheduled undertaking was a hiker’s report to the Trail Care Program that there were many obstacles blocking the 27 mile Old Loggers Path loop. Access to sections of the trail is still problematic due to bridges being washed out on both Hills Grove and Pleasant Stream roads. On Friday, October 26 two saw crews walked through and cleared 17 miles of the trail. Volunteers then return on Saturday, November 10 to finish the remaining 10 miles along with the 7 mile Hawkeye and 3 mile Sand Spring Trail loops. Hikers and backpackers will now have an easier time enjoying the trail experience in this part of Loyalsock State Forest. Thanks to “flash crew” participants Fred Hunsinger, Rick Stibgen, Jenn Ulmer, Tony Robbins, Tom Bastian and Ed Lawrence. Working together and working safely is a core axiom of the KTA Trail Care Program.

Trail Care Hours

Don't forget to send your club's trail care hours for 2018 to Cameron Elo at ktaadmin@kta-hike.org by 12/12 for our annual trail care report to send to DCNR.

Bucktail Path Trail Care; The Last is First

as told by Ed Lawrence

The KTA Fall Weekend traditionally marks the end of the trail care season for the year. This means that the last Trail Care weekend of 2018 is also the first event of the 2019 Trail Care calendar. Weather conditions, which can be variable in November, turned out to be ideal for the rebenching of the treadway of the Bucktail Path on sections of the trail that skirt McNuff Run in Elk State Forest. Improving the foot path by digging and outsloping is a work intensive venture, and the 14 volunteers that rotated through the weekend deserve much credit for the good work that was accomplished along this beautiful part of the trail.



Pulaskis, hazel hoes, pickmatics and fire rakes were the tools of choice that the crew carried into the woods on the Mowray access trail, hitting the junction with the Bucktail Path and immediately starting to work south. The crew was, once again, based out of the Brooks Run Fire Tower Cabin. There surely is no finer way to relax after a fall day of trail work than to bask in the warmth and crackle of a fire in the cabin’s stone fireplace as the temperature begins to drop outside. Although everyone is responsible for providing their own meals, this year Tony Robbins brought several dishes to share that his mother had prepared for the weekend

volunteers, Jenn Ulmer and Donna Thompson contributed chili and home baked bread and Wanda Shirk provided dessert for all by buying out a local bake sale. After everyone's hunger was assuaged by the bountiful repast, the evening was spent in the flickering light of convivial conversation.

Trail Care regulars welcomed 4 new volunteers, Shira Blady, Brian MacNamara, Ken Baron and Penn State Outings Club member Shawn Chang, who arrived Saturday night with fellow students Paul Kim and Connor McInerney. Other volunteers were Rick 'Handlebar' Ostheimer, Mary Ladish, Tom Bastian and Ed Lawrence. The crew put in a total of 189 hours of work which also included clearing blowdowns from the trail south of its northern terminus at Sizerville State Park. The Bucktail Path was a fine ending to Trail Care events in 2018 and an excellent way to kick off the 2019 season. Many thanks to everyone that participated.



HIKER'S CORNER

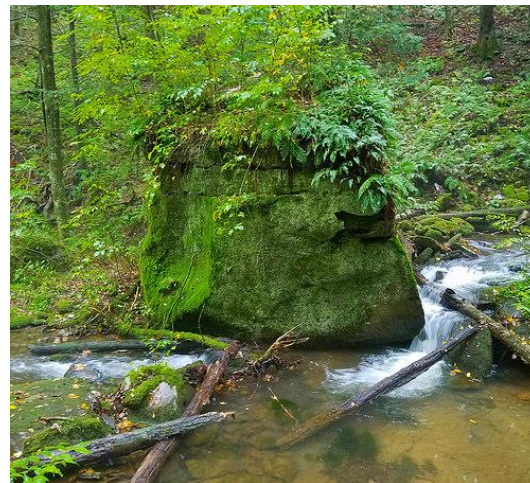
2019 Events Coming Soon

With 2018 coming to an end, we've been working tirelessly to get 2019 events ready for you! Some links are going to be listed below in the "Community Calendar", and more will be on our website in the near future.

Jeff's Jaunts

Jeff shows us the breathtaking Table Falls and the beautiful White Oak Draft at the Quehanna Wild Area in the Elk State Forest. Check out Jeff Mitchell's latest treks by clicking on the photo to see more.

"Quehanna has many beautiful streams and drainages, often featuring cascades, giant boulders, moss, hemlocks, and thick rhododendrons. One such stream is White Oak Draft, conveniently located along Wykoff Run Road."



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

2019 KTA Events

April 12-14 - Spring Hiking Weekend in Waymart, PA

[May 3-7 - Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail Slackpack](#)

[June 14-16 - Trek the Tiadaghton](#)

August 9-11 - Allegheny National Forest Hiking Weekend

[NEW! 2 trips on the Quehanna Elk Quest! Weekend #1 Oct 4-6 & Weekend #2 Oct 6-8](#)

October 25-28 - Black Forest Trail Slackpack

In Memory of Hugh Downing

This October we lost a beloved member and former president of KTA. Below is his obituary.

“Age 86, of Sherwood Oaks, Cranberry Township, PA, died October 30, 2018. He lived in Penn Hills, PA for 37 years. Mr. Downing was born March 31, 1932 in Roanoke, VA, the son of George Valentine and Dorothea Jones Downing of Salem, VA. He worked in television production throughout his career, most recently at WQED (TV) as a producer/director. He was married to Mabel Esther (Beni) Benedict, daughter of Augustus Weaver and Mary Evelyn Northrup Benedict, on May 31, 1954 in Guilford College, NC. He is survived by his wife and two sons Joseph (Camille) of Hampton Township, PA, and Thom (Laurie), of Alexandria, VA; granddaughter Sierra and grandson Alex.

Memorial contributions: KTA, 46 E. Main St., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055, or Sherwood Oaks Fund Scholarship Fund, 100 Norman Drive, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066.”

His leadership and continued support helped KTA for many years and we send our deepest condolences.

WANT YOUR EVENT FEATURED ON THE COMMUNITY CALENDAR?

KTA will promote your club/organization's major events through The Keystone Hiker, Facebook, and our website. It's a perk of membership!

Just submit a list with date, time, location, and link to web page for only those events that the public should see, to info@kta-hike.org.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

This newsletter is published monthly by Keystone Trails Association. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Opinions expressed are those of the listed authors. The Editor encourages submissions reflecting all viewpoints, but reserves the right to edit material. You are encouraged to submit material (even just a trail closing or care alert!) to the Program Administrator, Cameron Elo, at ktaadmin@kta-hike.org. The deadline for newsletter submissions is the 15th of the prior month. Submissions received after that time will be considered for the next month.

Please reference our [Editorial-Style Guide](#) while you compose your piece.