



THE KEYSTONE HIKER

Preserving Pennsylvania's Footpaths since 1956

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

MEMBER CORNER

KTA Has Switched to the G Suite!

A huge thank you to Tom Kelliher for his tremendous help in this effort! We can be reached at our previous email addresses or at our new ktaadmin@kta-hike.org. If you do not get a response from us within a few business days, please call the office at 717-766-9690.

For anyone who needs to add or update their email address in our systems, please go to www.kta-hike.org/contact.html or give us a call at 717-766-9690.

Meet KTA's New Intern, Raymond Arke!



Raymond is a junior political science major with a minor in journalism at Duquesne University. He is a graduate of Mechanicsburg Area Senior High School. Raymond has had a lifelong love of the outdoors, much of it coming from twelve years in Boy Scouts which culminated in an Eagle Scout award. Throughout his life, he has been able to hike various parts of trails in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Raymond looks forward to interning at Keystone Trails Association this summer.

Thanks To All Who Attended KTA's First Backpacking 101 Workshop: Part 1

by Brynn Furnace, KTA Program Administrator

On Saturday, May 20, 2017, fifteen participants attended KTA's first Backpacking 101 Workshop: Part 1 gathered at Little Buffalo State Park to learn the basics of backpacking from three experienced backpackers and KTA Board members, Dave Gantz, Jim Foster, and Paul Shaw.

Topics included planning a trip, gear, and safety on the trail, among others. A cooking demonstration by Paul, taught the group that with the proper planning, food can be quite tasty in the backwoods! Those who attended Part 1 have the opportunity to put what they learned to the test by attending Part 2, a backpacking trip with the experienced leaders.

For planning purposes, if you are interested in attending a future Backpacking 101 seminar, please email Brynn at bfurnace@kta-hike.org.

Black Forest Trail Slackpack Reflection

by Wanda Shirk, KTA Board Member

Seven hikers completed the Black Forest Trail from May 19-22 on a KTA-sponsored slackpack of the 42-mile loop. The group camped in three cottages at Little Pine State



Park and were guided by veteran hiker, guidebook author, and KTA council-member Ben Cramer, who had completed the BFT four times previously in his 4000+miles of hiking on Pennsylvania trails. Hikers gathered on Friday for a 6-mile, afternoon "warm-up" hike from Manor Fork Road to the Slate Run bridge. They then hiked approximately 12 mile distances on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, completing segments from Slate Run to Rt. 44, then 44 to Trout Run Road, and finally Trout Run Road back to Manor Fork Road.

Trail shuttles each morning and afternoon were provided by KTA board member Wanda Shirk, who also cooked for the group at the park. Hiker-suppers included chicken breasts, pork chops, and taco salad, as well as accompanying veggies and desserts. Breakfast sandwiches and coffee got the gang off to a start each morning, and hikers packed hearty lunches, emptying the crunchy peanut butter jar and choosing as well from lunch meats, fruits, and trail bars.

Hikers came from three states-- Pennsylvania, New York, and Delaware. At least half the group started with some trepidation and uncertainty about whether they were really up for the challenge of the BFT's notoriously steep ascents and descents. Nicole, who notes that the flatness of her home state of Delaware offers no opportunity for her to train for handling hills, was particularly exultant to experience total success on the trail. In her words, "What an amazing adventure we had on the BFT! Thanks to all of you I am able to tell a tale including the completion of this trail that I was not sure possible of myself just one week ago."

The Black Forest Trail is known for its vistas, which include some of the best among all Pennsylvania trails. The slackpack opportunity, which is limited to six because of van capacity, filled quickly after it was announced in February. Last year's KTA spring slackpack was on the Allegheny Front Trail; next year's is projected for the Thunder Swamp Trail. In the meantime, a slackpack on the southern half of the 84-mile Susquehannock Trail System (STS) will run in July in conjunction with KTA's Prowl the Sproul. It's a great opportunity to check out places like the Hammersley Wild and the famous pool on Hammersley Run, and registration is open now.

Brand New Slackpack Being Offered at the

14th Annual Prowl the Sproul: July 28-30



Complete the southern portion of the Susquehannock Trail in just 3 days! Slackpack price reduced! Check out the Events Page for the registration form, and mail payment to KTA or register online.

Registration Open for the 9th Annual KTA Trail Challenge: September 9, 2017

Go to the Event Page for the registration form and mail payment to KTA or register online through Pretzel City Sports. Act soon to receive a discounted price until July 1. Preview Hikes now available!



Registration Open for 2017 Quehanna Elk Quest: September 29 – October 1

Explore the Moshannon and Elk State Forests, hike with KTA staff and Board members, view the elk herd in the Benezette area, and complete your weekend adventure at *Gunners* - a quaint motel/restaurant in historic St Marys, PA. Go to the Event Page for the registration form and mail payment to KTA or register online.

Registration Open for 2017 Fall Hiking and Meeting Weekend: October 13-15

This year the fall meeting location is Wesley Forest Camp and Retreat in Weikert, Union County. Go to the Event Page for the registration form and mail payment to KTA or register online.



Perks of Membership

Keystone Trails Association Members now enjoy a 10% Discount when they shop at Appalachian Outdoors in State College.

YOUR HIKING ADVOCATE

Only Days Remain to Sign Up For KTA Lobby Day!

by Joe Neville, KTA Executive Director

Please join KTA staff and board members as we descend upon the Pennsylvania capitol and lobby our legislators to oppose lifting the ban on Sunday hunting.

KTA plans on having a large presence at the capitol on June 6 to convince our elected officials that most Pennsylvanians do not support the recent efforts of the National Rifle Association and Pennsylvania Game Commission to lift the ban on Sunday hunting and take away our 1 day of the week when we can hike in safety and quiet.

Staff will guide you with a planning meeting describing how to meet with legislators. We'll also guide you around the capitol, provide handouts and talking points, and schedule all appointments.

When: Tuesday, June 6, 2017, at 8:30 AM.

Where: Pennsylvania state capitol (meet in the cafeteria).

Sign-Up and Additional Information: E-mail your interest to jneville@kta-hike.org or call 717-766-9690.

VOLUNTEER / MAINTAINER'S CORNER

It's Here! The 2017 Trail Care and Crew Schedule!

Before you go, please read our Trail Care and Crew page on kta-hike.org for helpful information and applications.

May 30 - June 4: Trail Crew Week #1

North Country Trail in Butler County

Leader: Dave Adams

davenjean@zoominternet.net

724-453-1685

Camp: stay in Davis Hollow Cabin, or camp outside, cabin located in Moraine S.P.

June 6 - June 11: Trail Crew Week #2

Thunder Swamp Trail System

Leader: Ed Lawrence

cathyed@frontier.com

570-925-5285

Camp: Resica Falls Boy Scout Camp

June 13 - 18: Trail Crew Week #3

Chuck Keiper / Donut Hole Trails

Leader: Tony Robbins

tony.robbins.kta@excellservices.com

570-437-0065

Camp: Western Clinton Sportsmen's Association

June 20 -25: Trail Crew Week #4

Mid State Trail, Everett Region

Leader: Deb Dunkle

dhdunkle@gmail.com

814-652-2227

Camp: Tenley Park, Everett

July 22: Code Orange

Little Buffalo State Park

Leader: Jim foster

jimhfoster@yahoo.com

717-649-5505

Meet at the park office at 9:00 AM

June 27 - July 2: Trail Crew Week #5

The Baker Trail

Leader: Dewaine Beard

dewaineb@gmail.com

412-719-9904

Camp: Creek Bend Campgrounds

July 7 - 9: Trail Care

Mid State Trail, Tioga Region

Leader: Pete Fleszar

tioga@hike-mst.org

717-583-2093

Camp: Hills Creek State Park, Organized group
tenting area

August 4 - 6: Trail Care

The Pinchot Trail

Leader: Jeff Mitchell

jmitchmitch@hotmail.com

570-441-2952

Camp: Manny Gordon Picnic Area, Pinchot State
Forest

September 15 - 17: Trail Care

Tuscarora Trail

Leader: Ben Auer

auer.ben@gmail.com

608-772-1715

Camp: PATC cabin at Little Cove

September 29 - October 1: Trail Care

Reeds Gap Spur

Leader: Jenn Ulmer / Donna Thompson

hawk2373@yahoo.com

570-854-8316

Camp: Reeds Gap S.P. sites 8 -14

October 7: Code Orange

Gifford Pinchot State Park

W/ Friends of Pinchot S.P.

Leader: Steve Stroman

stevestroman@hotmail.com

717-350-0437

Meet: 8:30 at Quaker Race day use area off Pa. 177

Camping available Fri. & Sat.

Friends Group will host Sat. evening cookout for
volunteers

November 3 - 5: Trail Care

Bucktail Path

Leader: Rick Hiemenz

mustardgarlic@hotmail.com

814-706-8218

Camp: Brooks Run Fire Tower Cabin

NOTICE: Code Orange Workday Rescheduled

by Ed Lawrence, KTA Trail Care Chair

The Nolde Forest Code Orange workday has been rescheduled to July 15. The original date of May 6th was cancelled due to inclement weather conditions. Hope to see you then.

Black Forest Trail Care – Weekend Report: April 28-30

by Jenn Ulmer, KTA Trail Care Leader

Sign, sign, everywhere a sign! There seemed to be a theme for the first KTA Trail Care weekend of 2018. We arrived at base camp (the Pump Station Fire Tower site, along the Ruth Will Ski Trail) to spy a bevy of shiny new trail signs. These were to be installed at trail intersections that currently lacked signs and to replace badly weathered signs. We had a fantastic Friday turnout of 8 eager workers. Tiadaghton State Forester Ben Sands had thoroughly scouted the approximately 43.5-mile trail, marking sections needing the most work, and we prioritized tasks. On Friday, we split into 2 crews: one went brushcutting, clearing and lopping; another set out installing some trail signs. After a couple of snafus with both crews, we eventually got the right equipment and manpower to the correct spots and ended Friday with a cleared trail and 6 signs “planted.”

Even more volunteers showed up Saturday, so we had 2 crews clearing a section of the trail along Young Womans Creek at County Line Branch, from both directions, and a separate signage crew. The signage crew plugged away at some of the harder-to-get-to, far-flung locations and installed another 4 signs and another sign on Sunday, bringing the grand total to 11 signs for the weekend. That’s awesome! The brushcutting crew finished their segment and started on another to the northeast, along Chestnut Ridge. Soon it was time to call it quits for the day; the crews returned to camp and headed out for a hearty supper at the nearby Black Forest Inn. After a rousing campfire and some scattered showers, we went to sleep, serenaded by a coyote and owl.

On Sunday, some volunteers headed back to Chestnut Ridge, while another crew started at the top of the Naval Run Trail. Despite some spotty rain showers, we made good headway. The second crew was treated to some seldom-seen Trail Care magic—upon our return to the vehicle, we found some refreshing beverages left for us by a local appreciative camp owner.

Thank you so much to all those who came from near and far (Pittsburgh! Reading! Baltimore!) to work for 1 or all 2 days: Ryan Adams, Tom Bastian, Henry Bonson, Martyann Gutierrez, Joanne Heimer, Woody Loudenslager, Ed Lawrence, Tony Metzger, Mary Pitzer, Jeff Raisch, Jake Richards, Tony Robbins, Rick Stibgen, Michael Sullivan, Wanda Shirk, Donna Thompson, and Daryl Warren. We hope you found the trail work as rewarding, and the camaraderie as engaging, as we do and come back soon! In fact, we hope to see you all (and more) return to continue improving the Black Forest Trail—and possibly the Golden Eagle and Bob Webber Trails, too—in 2018!

It’s KTA Crew Season

by Ed Lawrence, KTA Trail Care Chair

As you read this, the North Country Trail (NCT) Crew is at work improving the hiking experience on a part of the Pennsylvania section of that multistate, long-distance trail. Their Crew Week, which began on May 30, will last until June 4; you can still join them for the weekend and become part of the NCT action team.

Crew Week #2 will be returning to the Thunder Swamp Trail system in Delaware State Forest, Pike County. The crew will be based out of the Resica Falls Boy Scout Camp, with canvas tent and cot accommodations and plenty of work to be done.

The Chuck Keiper and Donut Hole Trails are on the crew schedule because the work that KTA participants get done June 13-18 is very important to the ongoing upkeep of these remote trails. Last year, the turnout for this crew was unusually low, which translated directly into less work getting accomplished. These trails need KTA’s volunteers to make a strong showing. Please consider spending all or part of this June week working with the crew based out of the ever-friendly Western Clinton Sportsmens Association’s campground.

The fourth week of Trail Care will focus on the Everett region of the Mid State Trail. Crew Leader Deb Dunkle never lacks for meaningful work on this edgy section of Pennsylvania’s longest hiking trail. The crew season

will conclude with a week working on the Baker Trail, June 27–July 2. This venerable western Pennsylvania trail is new to the KTA lineup this year, and the Trail Care Program is excited to encourage active participation to help Trail Crew Leader Dewaine Beard whittle down his to-do list. As usual, all Trail Crews include camping and meals. Trail Crews account for the bulk of the hours of work that KTA contributes to the hiking community. Join in—it's good work and good karma.

At The Igloo

Photo by Jim Laird

Crew Leader Deb Dunkle knows how to keep her volunteers happy. A stop at the Everett, aptly named Igloo, for a refreshing cone never hurts. Her Mid State Trail Crew Week runs June 20-25. Get yours with sprinkles.



We Want You!

Volunteers are needed for the 9th Annual Trail Challenge September 9, 2017

Please see the Event Page for the registration form to mail to KTA or sign up online. Volunteers receive the satisfaction of a job well-done, t-shirt, and picnic by Legends Catering.

HIKER'S CORNER

Updates To Old Loggers Path Access

by Dick Martin, PA Forest Coalition Coordinator



Due to the recent flood (8" of rain in 6 hours), access to the Old Loggers Path near Pleasant Stream is very limited.

Loyalsock State Forest has provided a map of the roads closed to motor vehicles.

Click [HERE](#) for the map.

- You cannot access mile 16.84 or mile zero via Rt 14.
- If you go in via Proctor and Cascade Road, you can access mile 23.53 on Hillsgrove Road. You must park 100 yards east of that road crossing (where a 30 foot section of road is washed out, 15 feet deep).

- You can "almost" get to Masten via Cascade and west on Hillsgrove. An unnamed tributary bypassed a culvert and took out the entire roadway as you get to "east Masten". It washed out another 60 feet of Hillsgrove Road, about 10 feet deep).

I have never seen devastation of this magnitude. The OLP is going to need many volunteers to repair sections of the trail that have been damaged. **The Old Loggers Path needs your help.**

Jeff's Jaunts: Hiking Hunts and Pigeon Runs – Waterfall Wonderland (SGL 13)

by Jeff Mitchell

As many of you know, the Waterfall Wonderland in SGL 13 is a place of amazing natural beauty. I love it for not only its waterfalls, but also its isolation, deep gorges, and large trees. I returned a few weeks ago to explore two tributaries of Sullivan Branch-Hunts Run and Pigeon Run. I explored each tributary on separate hikes...

<https://endlessmountains.wordpress.com/2017/05/16/hiking-hunts-and-pigeon-runs-waterfall-wonderland-sgl-13/>



Walk with Gantz: Quehanna Trail

by Dave Gantz, KTA Board of Directors

Dave recently dedicated himself to writing a monthly column about backpacking trails he's hiked in Pennsylvania.

The Quehanna Trail in Moshannon and Elk State Forests, PA is an amazing 75-mile backpacking loop. The QT is a remote trail, with minimal cell reception and minimal use. The Quehanna Wild Area is outstanding and well-known, but the rest of this route is an unknown adventure! It includes a good amount of elevation change, and tons of wildlife, including elk. Plenty of trailhead parking areas, including a few PA state parks allow for easy access to this trail system. The QT never disappoints!

The QT lies entirely within a portion of PA known as 'PA Wilds'. A few selfless volunteers care for these trails, but there is a lot of work to do. The first lesson of the QT: be prepared for brushy trails. Many miles of this trail lead hikers along open meadows along the Allegheny Plateau. These meadows are filled with blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and ferns. During the right season, these plants and their fruits can be delicious trailside snacks. During other times, these plant species can make hikers shins bloody. Be prepared with long pants and/or ankle gaiters.

Lesson two: Wet feet. Years ago I lost a trekking pole to a high stream along the Quehanna Trail. A quick glance at any Quehanna Trail map will show many stream crossings, some easy and some not so easy. Even when the water levels are low, portions of this trail can be boggy, or inundated with water as a result of beaver activity. Other sections, like Misquito Creek at Corporation Dam and Medix Run, can be flat out dangerous to cross during high water. Luckily, multiple side trails and cross connector trails afford backpackers the ability to quickly change plans during adverse conditions. This brings us to lesson three: connector trails!

Anyone attempting to backpack the entire Quehanna Trail should be prepared to accept failure and be willing to utilize alternative routes to get back home. Seriously. I've successfully hiked the QT several times, but I've also

had to call it quits several other times and take side trails back to my car. Luckily, there are tons of connector trails in this forest, so alternative routes are easy to spot. Many of these connector trails are just as nice, if not nicer, than the actual Quehanna Trail!

Lesson four: Watch your step! The wildlife along the QT is quite amazing, but tread carefully! I've almost stepped on white tail fawns, rattlesnakes, porcupines, etc...Coyotes, bear, and elk are also very common in this area. Migrating song birds also love this plateau, so keep an ear open for their beautiful songs!

Lesson Five: Is it drafty out here? Chuck Keiper Trail has 'licks', Allegheny Front Trail has 'runs', Mid State Trail has 'creeks'. Old Loggers Path has 'streams', and the Quehanna Trail has 'drafts'. A term that seems to be unique to this this area, drafts are simply streams. The going theory is these areas are called 'drafts' because of the air currents that are derived by the deep cuts in the plateau. No matter the terminology, be sure to get out and enjoy this pristine part of Pennsylvania!

Find the Quehanna Trail and all of the side trails in the surrounding area on the newest Purple Lizard Map, which is set to print in June 2017.

To view pictures from the trip, go to <http://www.walkwithgantz.com/quehanna-trail-system.html>.

Angel Falls

by Gerry Rowan

The heat and humidity were oppressive for May. My buddies and I decided to beat the heat by heading out for a weekend hiking/camping trip. We settled on Loyalsock State Forest in Sullivan County and a dry-camping permit from the forest ranger station. That gave us 2 weeks in the woods away from everything.

We set up camp near a small, nameless, spring-fed stream. We pitched our tent under a big pine tree facing the stream. Although a good hundred yards from our truck, our campsite had convenient spring water, and the stream valley was deep enough to offer shade from the midday sun and some protection from storms.

By four-thirty that afternoon, we finished setting up camp and organizing our gear. To keep the bugs away, we gathered firewood and built a small, smoky fire. I pulled out the quadrangle map of the forest region we were in so we could plan a hike for early the next morning. A waterfall was marked on our map—Angel Falls, reportedly among the highest in the state. It looked to be about 4 to 5 miles from our campsite. The elevation change from our campsite to the crest of the falls was about 800 feet vertical. Not a killer hike, but it looked interesting—at least on paper—and seemed perfect for getting our hiking legs back in order.

We made a meal of “cowboys and Indians”—turkey burgers, potatoes, and onions foil-roasted in the campfire, along with a pot of coffee. We'd have fresh meat again tomorrow and then switch to canned and freeze-dried food as our ice chest gave up the ghost.

The night was still a bit muggy when we turned in around nine-thirty. But by one in the morning, the air had cooled enough for me to zip up my sleeping bag about halfway.

Breakfast was oatmeal with dried fruit, evaporated milk, and coffee. We filled our water bottles and geared up for our morning hike. I made a mental note that sometime that day, we'd need to make a run to the ranger station for more water. I didn't want to risk drinking unfiltered spring water. Since the ranger station was

nearby, it was easier than filter-pumping water from the stream.

The stream valley at our campsite was deep enough that our NOAA weather radio didn't work. Clouds were beginning to build to our west, but the weather forecast from yesterday didn't mention rain. It seemed we were in store for good weather, and hiking light was the order of the day. Not expecting rain, we left our rain gear behind in the tent.

We started our trek by hiking up the road about a quarter mile and then turning right onto an old logging road. The road cut across the grade and uphill. The angle of the climb was reasonably good, and the hike was going well.

The forest was open, with large trees, mostly oak and maple, and not much of an understory—the kind of a forest where you can be a tourist and see everything nature offered. The dry runs and cuts were forested with hemlock and white pine. This area must have been logged off sometime in the past, or the road would not have been there. Given the large size of the trees, the logging might have taken place a century or so ago.

About an hour into our hike, the sky began darkening as clouds built into thunderheads. Suddenly the sky opened, and the rain—torrential and monsoonlike—poured down on us. Strong winds blew the rain into sheets that beat against us. The heavy rain, combined with multiple lightning strikes on top of the ridge, made us think this storm would soon exit the area. But after a half hour without any letup, it became clear that this was far more than a passing thundershower.

I've never been as wet as I was that day. We did an about-face and double-timed it back down the trail heading for camp. The rain sucked the heat from my body, and I was shivering when we made it back to our tent with its promise of warmth and dry clothing.

It was far too wet to light a fire; that night, we ate cold food. The rain fell all night; lightning strikes lit up our tent from the outside. Sleep was fitful, and our sleeping bags were really damp. To air the tent out while we hiked, we'd left open the door-flap. (Again, we hadn't expected any rain.) Our tent had that characteristic smell tents get when they're packed away for the winter.

The wind changed direction overnight, signaling that the weather front had passed over us and the rain would soon stop. At first light, we packed up our wet clothing and the sleeping bags and headed off to the nearest town (18 miles away, and just outside the state forest) for a laundromat and some breakfast. At the laundromat, we loaded the wet stuff into 2 dryers and inserted enough quarters for an hour and a half of drying time. Then we crossed the street to a diner, where we ordered a huge breakfast and filled our thermoses with hot coffee.

We returned to our campsite at eleven. We had the best of the day ahead of us. Indeed, the day was maturing into one of those glorious, brilliant late-spring/early-summer days when a dome of high pressure floods down from Canada. A cerulean sky that darkens to ultramarine at the horizon, not a cloud anywhere, and the burning orb of the sun overhead.

Not to be defeated by the weather, we retraced the route we'd taken the day before and started up the ridge toward Angel Falls. The 2½-hour hike brought us to the top of the falls. The storm had blown down many trees along the logging road. I was expecting a large falls with a great flow of water. Angel Falls was high, but its stream—Falls Run—was small. The stream plunged off the plateau about 165 feet, with some water misting around the falls. Ferns and moss covered the cliff, rocks, and trees at the falls—a lush, otherworldly carpet of bright yellow-green where gnomes, sprites, and fairies might live.

Angel Falls wasn't so much a disappointment as it was anticlimactic. A beautiful place, with an endless veil of

misty water cascading down the rock face, but upstaged by the previous day's storm. The memory of the storm still stays with me. I wasn't an inexperienced hiker—I'd been hiking for some 45 years of my life at that point—but I'd never experienced such ferocity from nature. It remains a humbling experience.

An Autumn walk

by E. J. Beck, life member and former KTA President

He's walking along the trail, pack on his back, hiking stick poking the trail ahead, and a song in his heart. The stream babbles pleasantly off to his right, the sky is clear, and the autumn temperature is pleasant. All is right with the world—or at least his current part of it. This is a great time to be out and about in Penn's Woods—the basis of the name *Pennsylvania*—and now here he is in the state's north-central part.

He's been looking forward to this hike for a while now. While sitting at his desk, supposedly tweaking computer code, he'd been contemplating what this hike would be like. And now here he is, nearly 10 miles from his car, thoroughly enjoying each step he takes on the trail. He hears some birds singing, although there aren't many this time of the year. The leaves have largely changed from their summer greens to their autumn hues. Most are still attached to the comfort of their trees, seemingly reluctant to enter the last phase of this year's life cycle. But some have come loose, floating on the breeze and settling mostly on the ground. A few, though, settle on the stream, where their adventure will continue to some unknown destination downstream.

Because of the fallen leaves on the trail, he's a bit cautious as he walks, using his hiking stick to push the leaves away. One never knows when a rock or branch might be lurking beneath the leaves, ready to trip the unwary hiker. To fall with a 50-plus-pound pack on your back wouldn't be good. He's always said that the only dangerous thing lurking in the woods is gravity.

The trail follows the stream through an ever-narrowing valley with trees on both sides. He's hiked this trail before, although from the other direction and with several other hikers. On that trip, he'd noted several places he thought he would like to see again—to spend a bit of time, not just hike through in a hurry to get to the next trailhead. He knows that up ahead, from the left, a small stream will trickle down the rocks and run across the trail. He'll have to step over this to keep his boots from getting muddy.

Reaching the stream, he fills a couple bottles with water. He'll later boil this water and use it for cooking. He has a separate bottle of city water for just drinking or brushing teeth. Great, he thinks—now he has more water, but he also has several more pounds added to his pack.

He eventually sees where the trail begins ascending the hill on the left side of the valley. The place he's looking for is near where the trail crosses over the top of this hill. As he gains elevation and looks ahead, he hopes what he sees is the actual summit. All too often, when looking up at where the trail meets the sky, you think you're seeing the top. But when you get there, you realize it's only a false summit—a place where the trail levels for a bit and then begins climbing even further. Fortunately, as he approaches the apparent crest, he sees just what he is looking for off to the left—a mountain meadow.

A mountain meadow is an anomaly in the forest. Trees don't grow there, mostly because of deer keeping everything but grass from growing. There are plenty of deer, and they diligently perform their duty of keeping the grass properly mowed. The meadow he finds, about the size of a football field, is about 15 feet off-trail; he gently pushes the underbrush aside as he makes his way to it. He checks where he'll pitch his tent off to one side of the meadow—certainly not near the middle, where it would blight this natural setting. He cautiously walks off to an area about the size of his tent, careful not to step into a hole or depression—knowing that what

seems to be a level surface might actually be a series of low, uneven hummocks.

He confirms this area is level, then loosens the shoulder cinches of his pack, opens the hip belt, and then swings the pack to the ground. He stands up and—whoa. He forgot that after carrying a heavy pack for several hours, you seem almost to float from the sudden lack of weight. He waits a few seconds to establish his equilibrium, then stands the pack against a nearby small tree.

He needs to set up his tent. He unstraps the tent from the pack and opens the ground cloth that's wrapped around the rolled-up tent. He places the ground cloth (actually a sheet of plastic) and arranges it on the ground. Next comes the tent, which he puts on the ground cloth and unrolls it. He gets the small bag of tent stakes out, then looks around for a hammer. There are usually hammers lying around just about everywhere, cleverly disguised as rocks. He finds an appropriate one, looks it over, decides it will do, smiles, and softly says, "I hereby christen you, 'hammer'; now let's get to work." He hammers the stakes into the loops at the 4 corners of the tent, then inserts the tent poles—a little more than a foot long and shock-corded together—at the corners and fastens them together at the top. After doing the other side, he opens the pole spanning the top and holds the upright poles together. Then he lifts the tent fabric and clips it to the poles. Voilà—instant lodging.

Next, he unstraps the air mattress and unrolls it into the tent. With a sincere thank-you to the person who invented the self-inflating air mattress, he opens the valve that allows air to enter the bag and watches the mattress to inflate. This is surely better than the old-fashioned way of huffing-and-puffing for 10 minutes to inflate a mattress.

He unrolls the sleeping bag on top of the mattress. Opening the backpack, he pulls out his bag with a change of clothes and tosses it into the tent, where it will double as a pillow for the night. Now that the air mattress is firm, he replaces the cap, looks around inside the tent, and decides all is in order. "Be it ever so humble, et cetera, et cetera," he thinks.

Evening's closing in; it's time to eat. First he gets the stove out of the pack, unfolds the legs so it can stand, and then pumps up the fuel tank to pressurize it so that the fuel will flow. Then he brings out a stack of nested pans and takes out one that will hold his dinner, such as it is. He pours out a cup of water into the pan. He pulls out one of the packages of freeze-dried dinners. There are several to choose from, but they all seem to taste alike. After the water boils, he stirs in the contents, then turns off the stove, puts the lid on, and lets his dinner simmer for 5 minutes.

The dinner of beef stew isn't really bad at all. Back home, he wouldn't have even considered touching this stuff, but here in the woods, it seems like a banquet. As he's finishing dinner, he uses the spoon to scrape the pan of every bit of stew that he can. When it's finished, he measures his drinking cup with water, then pours it into the pan to make a cup of tea. Yep, stew-flavored tea. This way, the pot's clean and actually washed with water. This is easier than having to wash any dishes or pots. When he gets home, he'll run all cooking materials in the dishwasher.

He takes a light rope out from his pack and throws it over the branch of a nearby tree. He ties the pack to one end and hoists it about 10 feet off the ground. Then he ties the other end of the rope to the tree. Now everything is out of reach of any forest creatures that might happen by.

Just before dark, he walks through the brush back to the trail and sits down to the scene before him. The trail is on the side of the hill, where he now looks down to the stream below, and the entire hillside is on the other side of the valley. He's pleased to note that since the sun has gone down over that hill, it will rise from behind him and light the scene that he is now facing.

He walks back to his tent to be there before it gets too dark to see. He stops to listen to a whippoorwill calling nearby. Another responds from a distance; they begin what seems to be a conversation. He's always liked the evening sounds of bird calls and believes this might be a major reason for his enjoying the evenings in this part of Penn's Woods.

He crawls into his tent and zips it closed. He takes off his hiking boots and lies down on the sleeping bag. He has a small, battery-powered light that he turns on to see while he enters his journal comments. He wants to note the highlights of the day, along with his thoughts about the experiences.

That done, it's time to sleep. It's been a great day, he thinks. Closing his eyes, he hears a call--*whoo-hoo-hoo-hoo, whoo-hoo*—from somewhere across the meadow. A great horned owl, calling into the night. He hears the call again—much closer (almost overhead) this time and, presumably, from another owl. And then yet another owl calls, from off in the distance. Neat, he thinks. This is beautiful music to fall asleep to.

Soon there's the sound of something scurrying about just outside his tent. A field mouse or similar creature, alarmed by the owl calls, is seeking better cover to be out of sight. Another of nature's intrigues is occurring. The owl hoots; the creature scurries, thinking it's finding a better place to hide but, in reality, giving away its location. The owl hoots again, listening intently for the scurrying that so often follows and able to hone in on the prey's location. Although owls are often credited with having superior eyesight, it's actually their uncanny hearing that makes them such successful hunters.

The nighttime sounds of hooting and scurrying go on, but soon he's almost asleep. Then he hears a new sound—a light crash in the leaves on the nearby ground, followed by a high-pitched squeal that quickly fades into the distance. He knows what's just happened—nature, although sometimes cruel, had completed another cycle. Well, he thinks, the owl now has its dinner, so things should probably be quiet for the rest of the night. He's soon asleep.

The night passes with an assortment of forest sounds. He's eventually awakened by a new sound—the distant barking of a coyote. It must be nearly dawn, he thinks, since the coyote is nature's way of heralding the day. Sure enough, just before sunrise, a coyote announces the upcoming day. And then another coyote seconds the notion that dawn is imminent. Not to be outdone, all coyotes in the area join in to make it unanimous. Dawn will be happening again.

He dresses, puts on his boots, unzips the 2 zippers of the tent, and crawls out. As he rezips the tent, he looks off onto the meadow, where he notices several deer looking in his direction. Of course they're watching—the sound of the nylon zipper is totally unnatural. He slowly and quietly finishes the zipping, then ever so slowly rises and moves to the edge of the meadow. He knows that it is only proper to cause the least amount of disturbance, since he's the one trespassing in the deer's domain.

He slowly makes his way back through the underbrush to the trail. He sits and looks out over the valley toward the opposite hillside. It's barely visible at this hour of the morning. The hillside is like a textured gray sheet. As the sky lightens, the opposite hillside assumes a lighter shade.

The sun is rising behind him, and he becomes aware of some color beginning to show on the hillside. Suddenly a ray of sunshine stabs through the trees behind him and splashes a bit of orange onto a tree on the opposite side. The splash of orange on the otherwise drab hillside is startling. Then there's another splash—this one more yellow. Then another orange, then a splash of red, then a shade of green. It's as though an artist (the sun, let's say) takes a bit of color from a palette and daubs it onto a canvas (the hillside, let's say). A daub of orange, a daub of yellow; then red, then green, then many daubs with a combination of the colors. As the sun continues rising and the rays find their way between the leaves, there seem to be multiple brushes daubing ever faster.

After what's just a few minutes, the sun rises over the treetops. The entire canvas is complete, with an array of every imaginable vibrant autumn color. This spectacle is much more than he'd expected. One reason he chose this place as his night-camping destination was to witness this spectacle. Watching the dull hillside transform into so many vibrant colors made the entire trip well worth the effort.

He walks back through the underbrush to the meadow. The deer have moved on, the meadow is empty, and a few morning birds are singing their morning songs. He unties the rope from the tree and lowers the pack. He takes out the stove, pumps it up, and measures some water into the pot. Breakfast will be a package of oatmeal. He checks his options, discovering that he has a choice of flavors: apple-and-cinnamon or maple. Oh, well, he thinks. Live adventurously—combine both flavors.

After the oatmeal, with the required scraping of the pot, he pours enough water in to boil water for tea. Oatmeal-flavored tea this time. As he enjoys the tea, he looks around at the pleasant surroundings—the deer-mown meadow, along with the oak and maple trees wearing their autumn hues occasionally interspersed with the dark green of conifers. The birds don't sing as much in the autumn as in the spring, but there are a few—a towhee, for instance, singing its *Drink your tea* song, along with (somewhere off in the forest) the melodious call of a wood thrush. They're all adding to the atmosphere of a beautiful morning. A slight breeze is blowing, causing a drizzle of leaves to flutter to the ground. Everything is peaceful.

And to think his office coworkers had asked him why he was going on this hike. They'd never believe how wonderful this is. He knows that, when he returns to work, explaining the sheer joy he's feeling right now, in this place, wouldn't do any good. To paraphrase Shakespeare's immortal Puck, "What fools those city-dwellers be." They'd never understand—unless, of course, they see things for themselves by heading out for a hike.

So now it's time to move on. He starts breaking camp by doing the reverse of setting it up—opening the air mattress, rolling up the sleeping bag, and rolling up the mattress by slowly pressing out the air. After he attaches the mattress and sleeping bag to his pack, he deals with the tent—unclipping the fabric, disassembling the poles, pulling up the stakes, rolling up the tent and the ground cloth, and attaching it all to his pack. He's almost ready to go, but first he must rechristen the hammer so it's once again merely a rock.

He looks around. The grass is pressed down where the tent had been. He walks around and kicks up the grass to remove, as much as possible, the fact that he'd been there. After all, when he'd arrived, the meadow seemed pristine, as if nobody had ever been there. He felt it was only right to leave the meadow just as pristine for the next hiker so that person would experience the same feeling.

With everything ready, he hefts the pack to his hip, slips an arm into a strap, and flips the pack around to put his other arm into the other strap. He positions the pack on his back, buckles the waist strap, and finally tightens the shoulder cinch straps. He retrieves the hiking stick from where it leans against a tree; then, at last, he's ready.

This weekend will sustain him for perhaps a week, but maybe longer. He'd spent at least a week contemplating this hike; later, once again sitting at his desk and staring at his computer, he'll think back to this hike and smile at the memories. He takes a final look around, then turns and takes his first step back toward reality.

Allegheny Front Trail Vistas

by Terri Davis

The Allegheny Front Trail (AFT) has been newly cleared—including Ralph's Majestic Vista and Ralph's Pretty Good View, tributes to the legendary Ralph Seeley, founder of the AFT and the Quehanna Trail.

Photos 1-4 by Moshannon State Forest staff after the recent clearing of the vistas.

Photo 5 submitted by Terri Davis; taken by Patty Sullivan. Terri and a friend hiked the AFT on Easter Sunday to see the vistas cut back. Terri notes the day was cool and very comfortable for hiking.

Gary Thornbloom, co-chair of the Public Lands Committee at the Pennsylvania Chapter Sierra Club, wrote the following article, "Taking in the Sights of Ralph's Majestic Vista," about the AFT and its vistas in the *Centre Daily Times*, Sunday, September 20, 2015:

Autumn hiking can lead to beautiful views. The deep green of summer is transitioning to autumn's dramatic palette, and the forest understory has thinned. By the end of October, deciduous trees are bare. From now until spring, the view from central Pennsylvania's ridge tops makes many hikes special. The trails that lead to those views are the result of the vision and hard work of both individuals and organizations. Ralph's Majestic Vista and Ralph's Pretty Good View honor one of those individuals.

The Allegheny Front Trail (AFT) has many great views, and the 3 mile section along the Allegheny Front includes the most impressive of these. There are several options for taking in the views. Parking at the Tram Road parking area on PA 504, 4.5 miles east of Black Moshannon State Park provides the option of hiking a 6.3 mile loop. The trail is rugged with lots of rocks – wear good boots!

Begin by crossing PA 504 and head south on the AFT. The trail soon begins a descent on what was "...one of the braided parts of the Great Shamokin Path Indian Trail, called in this case Bald Eagle's Path." Great Buffalo Swamp (GBS) by Ralph Seeley. This is the first of several dips into and out of hollows along the Allegheny Front. The sidehill trail along this section was built by the Keystone Trails Association. Shortly after returning to the top of the Front there is a vista that looks south where to the left is a ...sharp mountain end that is Tussey Mountain above the Juniata Gap Natural Area – nearly 25 air-miles away."

After a brief respite, the trail visits two arms of Whetstone Run. This section include challenging side hill hiking, made manageable by some impressive trail construction by the Penn State Outing Club. The short return to the Front between the two arms includes a vista that looks southeast.

The next vista, a well-defined campsite, comes after tough hiking in hollows and along sidehills and looks toward Bellefonte and Milesburg. More side hill hiking, and more views, and you arrive at Ralph's Pretty Good View, a view that is actually excellent. Move around a bit to take in the miles and miles of Tussey Mountain's ridge line.

And this brings us to Ralph. Ralph is Ralph Seeley and his lifelong passion has been trails. He has pursued the history of the oldest paths, tracks, and roads, and as an author his in-depth research informs us about the area those trails wind through. His vision for specific trails has led to the construction of those trails. He has had a hand in building bridges that take the trails over the streams.

Ralph has paddled, hiked, cross-country skied, and snow shoed his way throughout central Pennsylvania. He has shared his insights, in person and with his writing, with many of us in the outdoor community. For many years, he was an advisor to the Penn State Outing Club. In 1998, he received the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Conservation Volunteer of the year award. Ralph is someone those of us who enjoy trails – particularly the Quehanna Trail, the Rock Run Trails, and the Allegheny Front Trail – owe tremendous thanks to.

In three tenths of a mile, you come to Ralph's Majestic Vista. Ralph modestly describes the view without calling it Ralph's Majestic Vista: "...on the edge below are the hollows and humps between the Front and the

Bald Eagle Valley; then the next, somewhat bumpy continuous ridge in the middle distance is the Bald Eagle Ridge...Beyond that is the Nittany Valley near State College...In the farthest distance, is the long line of Tussey Mountains.” Binoculars will help you pick out structures in downtown State College and on PSU campus, as well as other natural and man-made features throughout the landscape.

Back on the trail again, there is a short climb up to an interesting rock outcropping that the trail threads up and through. Encountering natural features, such as this, are a result of the extensive field work that is part of laying out a trail. People such as Seeley do this preliminary work to make the hike a richer experience. A gentle half mile descent brings you to the Underwood Road, a gravel State Forest Road; go 1.9 miles north to SR 504: then .3 of a mile east to the Tram Road Parking.

An alternative is to park where the AFT crosses Underwood Road. This avoid the hollows and side hill hiking, and sets up a relatively easy hike to Ralph’s Majestic Vista and Ralph’s Pretty Good View. This is a nice sunrise or sunset option.

However you hike in to the views along the Allegheny Front, the views are worth the effort. Autumn is a perfect time to make that effort. And while you are enjoying the panorama, take a moment to appreciate the dedication and vision of Seeley and all the others who make Pennsylvania public land such a great place to enjoy and to explore.

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Regarding the “Front” section of the AFT, Ralph states on page 90 of his book *Greate Buffaloe Swamp: a Trail Guide and Historical Record for the Quehanna Plateau and the Moshannon State Forest (third edition, 2001)* that, in 1995, he and

Ken Barnes of the Moshannon State Forest district office . . . started scouting along the Allegheny Front east of [Black Moshannon State Park], sometimes alone and sometimes together. In June 1996 the first trail crew, a KTA crew, worked on the Front from Underwood Road to the Rattlesnake Pike.

Ralph includes a descriptive guide of this trail section, along with interesting historical notes. Ralph is wrapping up writing the book’s fourth edition.

Pages 34-39 of Ben Cramer’s book *Guide to the Allegheny Front Trail (second edition)* provide turn-by-turn descriptions of (and noteworthy comments on) hiking the AFT, including the “Front” section and its vistas. This handy guide helped me immensely last year as I traversed the rocky terrain for trail maintenance.

Recently, Mary Ann Williams gave me old newsletters and printouts from the now-disbanded Quehanna Area Trails Club (QATC). I found some interesting items about the vistas along the AFT. One newsletter, dated August 1996, includes a write-up by Ralph entitled “Loop Trail Around the Black Moshannon Park Area”:

A trail has been started that will loop around the whole Black Moshannon area, eventually totaling an estimated 35 miles.... The name for the new loop trail may be the Allegheny Front Trail; this has not been decided for sure yet.... From [Julian Pike] the trail goes east out to the Allegheny Front, and is complete for some 4 miles to the Front and along it some distance. It is also complete from Rt 504, the Rattlesnake Pike, west along the Front to a point within a half mile of the above section [The new trail meets Rt 504 where the Rock Run Entrance Trail starts.] There was so much sidehill and laurel work that the two pieces were not connected together when the KTA Trail Care crew worked there in early July.... The portion along the Front may well be the most difficult trail work of the whole loop. There will eventually be several vista points in the Front Portion.... It will take at least another year to complete.

Ralph has another write-up, "Update on the Allegheny Front Trail," in a newsletter dated March 1997:

By the end of the work season in November 1996, the AFT was open (but not totally blazed) from the Julian Pike at the end of the Moss Hanne trail, over to the Rattlesnake Pike and the connection with the Rock Run Entrance trail (some six miles). There is a short piece starting about a mile west of the Rattlesnake Pike that still does not have permanent orange blazes, but I expect to get out to fix that in a few weeks.

Over the past year, between the permanent maintainer, Ted Pruss, Mary Ann Williams, myself, Ed Lawrence of KTA, Moshannon State Forest staff, and others, the AFT has made a near-complete comeback from the D.O. (dreaded overgrowth). Pockets of greenbrier and other thorny species were clustered overwhelmingly near what people love about the "Front" section of the AFT—its vistas—and by the end of last summer, we'd thoroughly subdued those pockets. Reblazing is under way, and there is a tad bit of cutting that needs to be done about midpoint. Sadly, due to the insect infestations in the past several years, trees are still falling, so if you hike this section (and other parts of the AFT), no sooner are logs cut up, then more will appear shortly after until the forest rebounds.

The AFT is a great trail, and people care about it. Last summer, one young backpacking couple told me they backpack the AFT about twice a year. They just love it. As a maintainer, it's nice to stop, take a break, and talk with the people who traverse the trail.

CLUB CONNECTION

Building the 2017 Club Calendar

Would you like KTA to promote your club/organization's major events with The Keystone Hiker, on Facebook, and on our website? It's a perk of membership. Please submit a list (ideally with date, time, location, link to web page) of only those events that the public should see, to info@kta-hike.org.

Thank you and happy trails!

Butler Outdoor Clubs Presents:

The Bantam Jeep Muddy 5K: Sunday, June 11th. Run the race or just attend the festival! For more information, go to <http://www.bantamjeepfestival.com/>

NCTA Allegheny 100

The Allegheny National Forest Chapter of the North Country Trail Association announces the 8th Annual Allegheny 100 Hiking Challenge!

On June 9th - 11th, 2017, come join us for this adventure through the beautiful scenery of the Allegheny National Forest.

The A-100 is an endurance challenge met through unsupported hiking. It is not a race, but an individual challenge of stamina, determination and resilience. Being an unsupported hike, there are no first aid or water

stations. Hikers are responsible for supplying their own food, drinks and equipment. Participants must recognize that cell phone reception is very spotty along the length of the trail.

The adventure covers a 100-mile stretch of the North Country National Scenic Trail in the Allegheny National Forest. Hikers will climb over rolling hills and pass through many beautiful stream valleys. The A-100 challenges hikers to traverse 100 miles, 75 miles, 50 miles or 25 miles in a fifty hour time period. This challenge is for anyone, regardless of skill level, who wants to test him or herself against the trail. Everyone needs to “hike their own hike”, moving at their own pace and resting when necessary.

For the 2017 challenge, hikers will travel north to south, from the Rt 346 trailhead, near Willow Bay to the Rt 66 trailhead, between Marienville and Vowinckel. A shuttle is offered to transport hikers from their finish point (where they've parked) to the joint starting point at the Rt 346 trailhead.

Those who pre-register will receive a membership in the North Country Trail Association, shuttle service to the start of the hike and a T-shirt. **Pre-registration begins on Monday, March 6 and continues to May 12, or when 150 hikers have signed up. Cost is \$55 for non-members and \$32 for members.**

In 2016, a record number of 100 milers, 25, completed their challenge. Perfect weather was a big factor. Four hikers completed 75 miles. Fifty-two hikers reached 50 miles, and another 19 completed at least 25 miles. Many met their personal challenge and many more vowed to be back next year to attempt to achieve their goals after learning so much out on the trail. Everyone enjoyed the beauty of the Allegheny National Forest, the friendships formed on the trail and the hospitality of the area.

For more information or to register, visit the NCTA website at <https://northcountrytrail.org/get-involved/special-events/allegheny-100-hiking-challenge/>, the ANF Chapter Facebook page www.facebook.com/ANFChapterNCT/ or email anf@northcountrytrail.org.

2017 UPCOMING EVENTS

To learn more about each event, visit our home page to explore event listings, or the Trail Care and Crew page for the full schedule and more information. Thank you!

May 25 - June 2: PA Hiking Week - cosponsored with DCNR

May 26 - 29: Butler Outdoor Club's Outdoor Extravaganza

May 30 - June 4: North Country Trail in Butler County, Trail Crew Week #1

June 6 - June 11: Thunder Swamp Trail System, Trail Crew Week #2

June 9-11: ANF Chapter of NCTA's Allegheny 100 Hiking Challenge (A-100)

June 11: NCTA Butler Chapter's Muddy 5k Race - during the Bantam Jeep Festival

June 13 - 18: Chuck Keiper / Donut Hole Trails, Trail Crew Week #3

June 20 -25: Mid State Trail, Everett Region, Trail Crew Week # 4

June 27 - July 2: The Baker Trail, Trail Crew Week #5

July 7 - 9: Mid State Trail, Tioga Region Trail Care

July 22: Little Buffalo State Park Code Orange

July 28-30: KTA's 14th Annual Prowl the Sproul Hiking Weekend

August 4 - 6: The Pinchot Trail Care

September 9: KTA Trail Challenge 25k and 50k

September 15 - 17: Tuscarora Trail Care
September 29 - October 1: Reeds Gap Spur Trail Care
September 29 - October 1: Quehanna Elk Quest
October 7: Gifford Pinchot State Park Code Orange
November 3 - 5: Bucktail Path Trail Care

Shop the KTA Bookstore

Check out KTA's latest addition: The Black Forest Trail Patch. Now available online or in the office.

KTA publishes and sells maps, guidebooks, and patches related to hiking trails in Pennsylvania. Members receive at least a 10% discount! Click the link to check out our online bookstore.

<http://www.kta-hike.org/ktas-bookstore.html>



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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, Brynn Furnace, at bfurnace@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.