



## The Keystone Hiker - August 2020

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### Member's Corner

### Allegheny National Forest Weekend

After a much delayed start to the hiking season, KTA took to the outdoors once again last weekend with a trip to the Allegheny National Forest. Hikers enjoyed beautiful weather and fantastic hiking trails, as well as a presentation from a bigfoot expert, while staying in Groves Lodge in the heart of the National Forest.



Thank you to our hikers and hike leaders for a wonderful weekend.

**photo by Kirk Johnson/Friends of Allegheny Wilderness**

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### Great American Outdoors Act

In an important conservation victory, the [Great American Outdoors Act](#) passed both houses of US Congress last month. The bill establishes the *National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund* to support deferred maintenance projects on federal lands and secures permanent funding for the *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)*.

The bill helps provide vital funding for federal lands to benefit conservation and recreation. With use of public lands spiking during the covid-19 pandemic, this comes at a time when our lands need it most.

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### Bureau of Forestry is in the process of writing a new Strategic Plan

The Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry is in the process of writing a new Strategic Plan that will set the bureau's mission and overarching goals. This

will be an update of the 1995 Penn's Woods plan. It guides how the Bureau provides leadership in forest management and conservation on both public and private lands in urban and rural areas. The survey linked below is intended to obtain input pertaining to the new Bureau of Forestry Strategic Plan. Please feel free to forward the link to this survey to others. Opinions about these critical strategic questions will prove valuable in the planning process. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey link will remain active until August 31, 2020.

[You can find the survey here](#)

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## Favorite Hiking Trail Survey

KTA is conducting a member survey of our favorite PA hiking trails and we want to hear from you!

Visit [kta-hike.org/trail-survey](https://kta-hike.org/trail-survey) or email us listing a few of your favorite trails.

Please include location, brief description, approximate distance, and why you think it's special, and please include any rail trail or historic trails as well. We will compile a list of these trails for our membership and it will help KTA in promoting and protecting trails in the Keystone State. Thank you!

## Volunteer's Corner

### August Trail Care Moving Forward

KTA Trail Care came out of hibernation in July with the first event of this Covid-19 year, reblazing the Lost Turkey Trail (see report from Blue Knob State Park). Many thanks to Wanda Shirk for coordinating and leading a successful gathering that got volunteers back in the woods in a consciously safe and refreshing configuration.

The Trail Care Program will keep the momentum going in August, with three of the originally scheduled events taking place. The Thunder Swamp Trail Care (20-23), however, is cancelled, due to the continued closure of the Resica Falls Boy Scout Camp.

Volunteers will be able to join other like minded trail enthusiasts on three August weekends to work on the Everett Region of the Mid State Trail (6-9), the Pinchot Trail (13-16) and the Donut Hole Trail (27-30). Participants should familiarize themselves with the recommended pandemic protocols found on the [Trail Care section of the KTA website](#). We want people to come out and feel the bliss of the trail care experience in a manner that keeps everyone safe while improving the trails that are at the heart of the hiking experience.

The **Mid State Trail Everett Region** trail care will once again be based out of spacious Tenley Park in Everett. There is no shortage of brushcutting, lopping and blazing to do on this remote and tiltrock section of the MST.

The **Pinchot Trail** event will be coordinated by Ben Auer (instead of Jeff Mitchell as originally listed). Please contact him at [auer.ben@gmail.com](mailto:auer.ben@gmail.com) if you plan on volunteering. The base camp will be located at the nearby Pocono Mountain Bible Conference Camp with tent camping and showers available.

Work on the **Donut Hole Trail** will round out the August events. Tony Robbins will again be leading this effort on one of Pennsylvania's most rugged long distance hiking trails. Volunteers will be staying in or camping around Hyner Lodge at Hyner State Park.

Doing trail work is one of the most rewarding experiences the great outdoors has to offer. See for yourself what it means to befriend a hiking trail.

-Ed Lawrence

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## SINGLE DAY BLAZE-BLITZ BRIGHTENS LOST TURKEY TRAIL

If you have ever hiked the 26 mile Lost Turkey Trail, located somewhat west of the Mid State Trail in south central Pennsylvania, you may remember being one of the turkeys who got lost there. I was one, and some other very experienced Pennsylvania hikers I know reported similar problems -- overshooting turns where blazes were obscured or missing and having to backtrack, puzzle it out, and add "bonus miles" to the day's hike. Such problems should be rare-to-nonexistent in the future, since a 13-person crew of KTA volunteers pulled off a single day blaze-bltz on the LTT on Saturday, July 11.

The southwestern trail head of the Lost Turkey Trail is in Gallitzin State Forest, with the northeastern terminus in Blue Knob State Park. The middle of the trail is on Game Commission land, and while the PGC allows trails to be built on its land, maintaining those trails is not part of its mission. That, as one PGC employee told me, is "up to KTA."

The LTT divides fairly nicely into three main segments of about 8-9 miles each, so the "Code Orange" blaze-bltz volunteers were divided into three groups of four, each comprised of two two-person teams. Each group took a third of the trail, with one team starting at one end of a trail section and the other team starting from the trailhead at the opposite end of the section. The job was for the two teams to blaze until they met in the middle, about four miles for each team. Then it was "mission accomplished" and a hike back to the cars.

On the southwest section, Mary Ladish and Pam Hershberger hiked north to meet Dave Scamardella and Richard Hershberger. In the middle section, Ben Auer and Billy Serafin hiked north to meet Bill Dietrich, Wanda Shirk, and Joe Gannon. On the northeastern stretch, Chris Brubaker and Donna Thompson blazed north toward Joanne Heimer and Polly Chatterton. For each pair, one person did the painting while the other handled lopping and bark scraping to prepare for the paint.

The day was somewhat rainy from time to time, but under the tree canopy, all teams persevered, putting in eight hour days and finishing about 4 p.m. The

Friday night campfire was rained out, but most of the group enjoyed camping at Blue Knob State Park, and all went home feeling well-paid by the sense of satisfaction for having made a difference on one of our state's major forest trails.

Completing all three of the nation's longest north-south trails is known as achieving the "Triple Crown" of American backpacking. Perhaps about 300 people have hiked all three: the Appalachian Trail, the Continental Divide Trail, and the Pacific Crest Trail. When I met Pam and Richard Hershberger on Friday night before our LTT Blaze Blitz, I asked them if they had done much hiking. "About 10,000 miles," Richard replied nonchalantly. My first thought was that he was grossly exaggerating the amount of hiking they had done and that he had no idea how much hiking 10,000 miles was -- but when he started rattling off trail names, and I realized that he and Pam were Triple-Crown-Plus-Much-More --well, I hope I worshiped appropriately! I have now met seven Triple Crown holders. The first two I met, I also encountered at a KTA weekend trail crew event, nearly two decades ago -- Jim and Ginny Owen. Just sayin'. You can meet really interesting people at KTA trail care events. You might try it sometime!

-Wanda Shirk

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## 2020 Trail Care Schedule

Visit <https://www.kta-hike.org/trail-care-and-trail-crew> for more info

**Aug 6 – 9: MID STATE TRAIL - Bedford County**

**Aug 13 –16: PINCHOT TRAIL - Lackawanna County**

**Aug 20 – 23: THUNDER SWAMP TRAIL SYSTEM - CANCELLED**

**Aug 27 – 30: THE DONUT HOLE - Clinton County**

**Sept 18 – 20: TUSCARORA TRAIL - Franklin County**

**Oct 3: GIFFORD PINCHOT STATE PARK - York County**

**Nov 5 – 8: BUCKTAIL PATH - Cameron County**

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## Additional Opportunities

**[Small Group Workday on KTA's section of the A.T.](#)**

Aug 5, 2020 | Lehigh Gap East A.T. parking lot

**[Workshop: Building Trails in Wetlands and Wet Areas](#)**

September 17 – 18, 2020 | Audubon Greenway

September 24 – 25, 2020 | Kings Gap Environmental Education Center

## Hiker's Corner

### Schuylkill River Trail

While most of us tend to hike wilderness trails in the Keystone State, we should not overlook the



many wonderful rail trails our state has to offer. One of these is the Schuylkill River Trail in southeastern PA. The SRT starts in Philadelphia and ends in Frackville, in Schuylkill County. That distance is about 103 miles, but the trail is unfinished in some places, so the actual hikable distance is about 70 miles.

As the name suggests, the trail shadows the Schuylkill River, much of it following the right-of-way of the former Schuylkill Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The areas through which the trail passes change quite a bit as one heads northward.



Starting in Philadelphia, one is surrounded by the history and high-rises of the city. This part of the trail lies within Fairmount Park and notable sights include the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Boat House Row, and Laurel Hill Cemetery. A bit further upriver is Manayunk, an old textile town; the trail here was a canal towpath many years ago. Public art is frequently spotted along the entire SRT and Manayunk has many murals and mosaics.

Next up is Valley Forge National Historic Park. Here hikers have the opportunity to explore the rich history it offers. Soon after, the trail crosses French Creek and passes behind Phoenixville, an old steel town that has been considerably revitalized in recent years. In lower Berks County, the trail follows the existing Thun Trail, named for industrialist Ferdinand Thun, who founded the Textile Machine Works in Reading, in 1892. The trail is discontinuous here, but plans are underway for a connection from Reading to Hamburg.



After picking up the trail again in Hamburg, one passes the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum, dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of the Reading Railroad, once one of the world's largest corporations. After leaving town, a 7-mile rural section opens up and runs along the side of Blue Mountain, at one point crossing the Appalachian Trail at Port Clinton. This final section is probably the most scenic of the entire SRT.

The trail ends in Auburn at an old railroad bridge which is currently closed off, so this part is definitely out-and-back, making for a longer day. There are multiple road crossings and trailheads, so shuttling vehicles for day hiking is a simple matter; we were able to hike the trail in eight roughly equal segments. Some creative shuttling is involved in the northern half due to the discontinuity of the trail. And for those beer drinkers among us, Sly Fox Brewing in Phoenixville makes the aptly named "SRT Ale," a delicious hop-forward pale ale. A portion of the proceeds benefits the trail.

Information and a map are available here:

<https://schuylkillriver.org/schuylkill-river-trail/>

by Jack Hauler, photos by Christine Chmielewski

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## Michaux State Forest Hike



I made a last minute decision on an early July weekday (due to cloud cover) to do a five mile loop in Michaux State Forest using the following trails: Yellow Ridge, Greenwood or Locust Gap, Appalachian, and Hosack Run Trails. This hike begins right along Milesburn Road, past the Long Pine Run Reservoir.

by Greg Strine (SleepyHeadOutdoors)

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## Golden Eagle and Hilborn Superloop-Tiadaghton State Forest



This rugged, beautiful loop combines the classic Golden Eagle Trail and the Hilborn Trails and should be on the list of any hiker looking for a challenge. Along it are stunning views, deep gorges, old growth trees, and cascades. And it can only really be dayhiked, adding to the challenge. Camping is not allowed on the game lands or the Golden Eagle Trail. There are some state forest lands along the Dragons Back Trail that may allow camping, but there are no established sites. Theresa joined me on this hike.

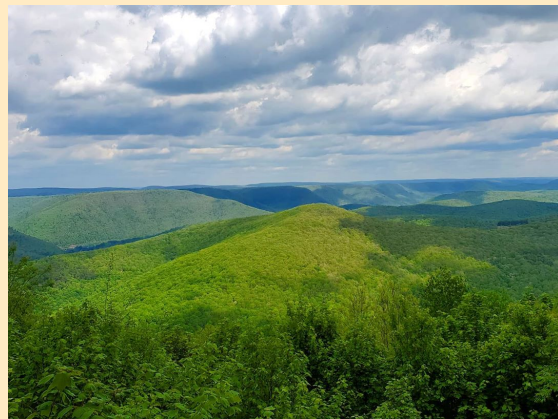
We began by hiking the orange blazed Golden Eagle Trail (GET) counterclockwise. We trekked up to Ravenshorn, passing several trail runners. After enjoying the views, we descended on the narrow ridge passing rock formations down to Wolf Run. The trail along Wolf Run is a favorite, with beautiful cascades and slides in a deep gorge. Wolf Run can be dry in the summer. As we hiked up the run, we enjoyed some giant hemlock and pine trees. At the top, we saw a nice view and then hiked a grassy forest road to beautiful Beulahland Vista, probably the most bucolic and serene vista you could hope to find. We did a quick side hike to Bonnell Run Vista where we saw a group of Amish hikers.

We retraced our steps back to grassy Beulahland Road, which is not

blazed. We hiked it for over a mile until there was a road climbing to the left, we took it. It brought us to stunning Twin Mountain Vista, a favorite of the hike. It reminded me of being in the Catskills. The trail now followed an unblazed ATV trail, but it was easy to follow as we hiked the ridge and made a short climb, and then a gradual descent to another great view from a meadow. The descent steepened to a great view looking across the gorge of Hilborn Run. From there, the trail became very steep as it threaded its way down to the rail trail.

We took a break at the rail trail where a sign pointed us towards the Hilborn Run Trail; again, not blazed but easy to follow. At first the trail was a gradual climb as it entered the gorge. We took a side trail to the left which brought us into the heart of the gorge, it was beautiful but not the right route. We returned to the proper trail. The climb began to get steeper, but never as steep as the Hilborn Bald Trail. We enjoyed some giant hemlock trees and the climb seemed relentless. We finally reached the top and the GET where we saw two hikers, but our route took us right onto a grassy forest road, which was unblazed. The yellow blazed trail began where the forest road ended.

We hiked the ridge which gradually became narrower above the Pine Creek Gorge. We then ran into Ericks and Dave, who were thruhiking the PA Wilds Trail. They were getting close to the end of their incredible journey and were looking a little tired. After talking, we headed down to Webber's Vista, named after Pine Creek icon Bob Webber who built many of the trails in the area. The view was great as it looked down on Slate Run.



Next was the descent of Quarry Mountain Trail, but first we went straight on an old road along the ridge to enjoy an incredible view looking up Slate Run. The descent was moderate as we switchbacked down the mountain to PA 414. We crossed the road and followed the rail trail to the left enjoying wildflowers, an old cemetery and great views of beautiful Pine Creek as people fished and kayaked. This area is incredible.

The rail trail brought us back to the cars, ending our exhausting but beautiful hike.

This hike is about 16 miles long and has about 7,000 vertical feet of climbing and descending. It is one of the most challenging and beautiful dayhikes you can do in the state. After finishing, celebrate with a meal and beverages in Slate Run or Waterville.

Parking is at 41.438796, -77.510714. For the map above, brown trails are not blazed, but are easy to follow.

[by Jeff Mitchell](#)



KTA is following proposed legislation that could impact trails and trail access in Pennsylvania. [Read the memo here](#). We have submitted the following letter to voice our concerns with this proposal:

Dear Representative Oberlander,

Formed in 1956, the Keystone Trails Association represents and advocates for the interests and concerns of the Pennsylvania hiking community. We currently represent over 44 clubs and organizations as well as thousands of individual Pennsylvanians who hike and enjoy the Commonwealth's outdoor resources.

We have read your co-sponsorship memo regarding "limiting prescriptive easements for trails" and have concerns that this proposed legislation could impact all recreation users who enjoy the outdoors and our miles of trails. Hikers, trail runners, bikers, environmental educators, birders, equestrians, and casual users of our trails could be negatively impacted. Our club members participate in thousands of hikes each year, and volunteer over 15,000 hours maintaining 3,000 miles of trails, including those on private property and over easements.

Of the hundreds of trails and wilderness areas available to the public in PA, many have become or risk becoming "landlocked." When this occurs, nearby landowners could attempt to block the public from accessing public land. Relying exclusively on already strained government agencies to prevent this makes no sense when individuals and organizations such as KTA are willing to defend public access rights without expenditure of state tax dollars.

Our friends at another of Pennsylvania's non-profit organizations recently shared the following points with us, and we agree with their concerns as well:

1. It is appropriate for the prescriptive easement to be held by a private nonprofit if providing public access is part of its corporate purpose/mission.
2. Private parties should not be prohibited from commencing litigation to secure the public's use, since government cannot always be relied on to put the public interest ahead of private interests.
3. The Recreational Use of Land and Water Act seems an inappropriate statute to address this subject matter.

We would be happy to meet with you concerning this issue and ask that at the current time you refrain from moving this legislation until all impacted parties can have further discussions.

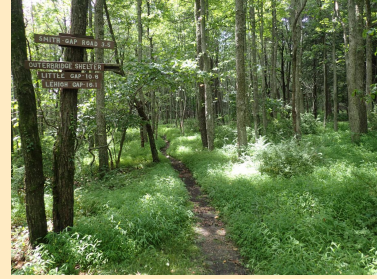
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## 2020 Summer/Fall Photo Contest

Submit your photos at <https://www.kta-hike.org/photo-contest.html>

The winner will be announced in January and will receive a free 1 year membership and KTA hat.





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## **Community Calendar**

### **KTA Events**

#### **Fall Hiking Weekend - Oct 2-4**

KTA hosts a weekend in Cumberland Valley south of Chambersburg with hiking opportunities on the AT, Tuscarora, Standing Stone Trails, and more.

#### **Black Forest Trail Slackpack - Oct 23-26**

Hike through the 42 mile BFT in 4 days with just a day pack. Stay in comfortable cabins at Pettecote Junction Campground.

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### **Club Events**

#### **Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club Banquet - Nov 14**

Heidelberg Country Club, Bernville, PA

**[Click here for more info and a form to RSVP](#)**

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### **Cancellations**

To protect the health and safety of our members and help reduce the spread of COVID-19, KTA events have been cancelled through June. Later events are set to go on as normal and will be reevaluated closer to the date.

Many events from member clubs and outside organizations have also been cancelled or postponed. Please check for the latest information from event organizers before attending.

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## **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 [ktaadmin@kta-hike.org](mailto:ktaadmin@kta-hike.org).

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## Club Spotlight

### Susquehanna Trailers Hiking Club



The Susquehanna Trailers Hiking Club was organized in 1932 by the Playground and Recreation Association of Wyoming Valley. In 2002 we celebrated our 70th Anniversary. We are based in Wilkes-Barre, PA. But our members come from as far away as Nicholson, Tunkhannock, and Bloomsburg.

Anyone is welcome to join us on our hikes. There is no charge and club membership is optional. Since we hike all year round please dress appropriately for the weather, wear proper foot gear and always carry water.

The group is varied - men, women, old, young, married, single and there are many vocations represented. But we all have one aim out on the hiking trail, to enjoy the outdoors

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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, Casey Schneck, at [ktaadmin@kta-hike.org](mailto: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.