

July 2017



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

A New Way to Give and Support KTA!

by Joe Neville, KTA Executive Director

KTA has now opened a brokerage account. This will enable our donors and supporters to increase their flexibility in giving. Donating long-term appreciated securities directly to KTA — rather than selling the assets and donating the cash proceeds — may be one of the best and easiest ways to give more. By taking advantage of the applicable tax incentives, you can significantly increase the amount of funds available for our trail care, advocacy, and hiking promotion efforts.

It's a win-win situation: KTA receives a nice contribution, while you, the donor can possibly write off the gift and avoid paying capital gains taxes on the stock. The strategy has been around for some time, waning during the financial crisis, but has regained popularity in recent years as the stock market has roared back to life. It makes the most sense for a donor because it's an easy, seamless transaction.

For more information please contact your financial advisor or Joe Neville for account information at 717-766-9690 or jneville@kta-hike.org.

Jubilee Day

by Raymond Arke, KTA Program Aide

On June 15, KTA hit the street in front of our office in Mechanicsburg to participate in the 89th Annual Jubilee Day celebration. Jubilee Day is the largest, longest-running 1-day street fair on the East Coast. We all felt lucky that the weather was nice and not quite as stifling as earlier in the week.

As a crowd of some 70,000 people went up and down Main Street, we positioned ourselves outside our front door with Alyssa Wentz, a representative from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). She was great and helped us promote hiking and trails throughout the Commonwealth. DCNR is always a valuable partner to have, and having a DCNR representative attracted more visitors to our table.

From 8 in the morning to about 6 at night, we handed out maps and brochures, educating visitors about KTA's mission and hiking in general. We also passed out flyers that detailed our upcoming trips, including Prowl the Sproul, Quehanna Elk Quest, and the Fall Hiking and Meeting Weekend. It was great to see the interest from so many different people. Some community members said it was the first time they had seen our office and mentioned they would visit more often.

Overall, it was a fun day. It helped increase our visibility and hopefully lead to more hikers venturing out into Penn's Woods. In addition, we were able to enjoy the vast collection of food the festival offered!

KTA Staff Attends Duncannon Appalachian Trail Festival June 17, 2017



Backpacking 101 Visits Bald Eagle State Forest

by Paul Shaw, KTA President

On June 10-11, participants in the KTA-sponsored Backpacking 101 overnight backpack braved warm, sunny days, a gorgeous moonlit night, and 15 miles of hiking on an array of well-maintained trails in the wilds of Bald Eagle State Forest. The small but enthusiastic crew of 6 included KTA President Paul Shaw and KTA Board Member Dave Gantz as instructors. Participants polished their backpacking skills first introduced at the Backpacking 101 classroom session held May 20 at Little Buffalo State Park.

After a gear review to ensure everyone was equipped properly and packs were adjusted, we began our hike on the Stover Gap East Trail, passing through meadows, deep forest, and several hunting camps before emerging onto Pennsylvania Route 192 west of R.B. Winter State Park. We continued with a gradual climb up McCall Mountain on the aptly named McCall Mountain Trail, stopping for lunch at a suitable spot. At the top, we followed an old, grassy logging road to the Black Gap Trail, which led through a delightful area of hemlocks. The Hall Trail then led to our campsite for the evening at the headwaters of White Deer Creek. Our first camping option was a very pretty site with a fire ring near the creek. Unfortunately, it was also very close to 2 vernal ponds that served as a home base for hordes of hungry mosquitoes. We quickly decided to take option 2: camping in a meadow about 750 feet from the stream.



Here there were far fewer mosquitoes, but water was less convenient. After setting up camp, a rattlesnake was spotted on the way to getting water.

After supper, we built a small campfire and watched the stars and planets emerge slowly from the dusk. The next morning, after breakfast and breaking camp, we continued on the Hall Trail through large stands of mountain laurel in full bloom to the Hough and Railroad Run Trails. Railroad Run, with its tumbling waters cutting through a mushroom-strewn hemlock forest, was the highlight of the day. After a brief pause for rest and snacks, we again reached and crossed Route 192 and followed the Shade Path back to our vehicles.

An issue that we discussed is the difficulty in finding others to join in backpacking, especially women. Perhaps KTA can help facilitate a solution.

All greatly enjoyed this introductory backpacking excursion and appreciated the congeniality of the group, as well as the tranquility and beauty of the forest. Participants departed with greater confidence in their outdoor skills and a desire to continue on with more adventures. As one wrote afterward, "I had a great time, learned a lot, and can't wait to get back out there again!"

If there is sufficient interest, Backpacking 101 may be offered again. Stay tuned!

It's Almost Time For The 14th Annual Prowl the Sproul: July 28-30

KTA and DCNR has joined forces to host a fantastic hiking weekend that you won't want to miss! Hikes suitable for all ages and abilities. 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. 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

KTA Advocacy Day Reflections

by Raymond Arke, KTA Program Aide

On June 6, KTA took to the state capitol in Harrisburg. Eight of us—Joe Neville, Brynn Furnace, Paul Shaw, Bob Merrill, Barbara VanHorn, Chris Zuzack, Jim Stickney, and me—got together to let legislators know KTA's opposition to removing the ban on Sunday hunting.

There was some nervousness and apprehension, as members don't normally frequent the corridors of power; however, Joe laid out a strategic game plan for us to follow. We met with 7 state senators and representatives or their staff throughout the day. Groups of 2 or 3 went to each meeting to make our case on keeping Sunday hunting banned. A couple of us were even able to meet one of the representatives right off the House floor. We also covered almost every office in the capitol, dropping off packets of information outlining our position for every legislator.

We were all received well in the meetings, with each legislator and staff member listening to our concerns, and we were happy that most agreed with our position. However, those who were ambivalent on the issue know they'll be facing strong future opposition. It didn't take long for us to feel comfortable chatting up movers and shakers.

The day was perfect for visiting Harrisburg since it was Dairy Day, and members of our group gratefully took advantage of the free Farm Show milkshakes.

All in all, our visit was quite successful. By taking our concerns to the people in power, we helped make all of the voices of Pennsylvania hikers heard.

Pending Budget Damaging To Trails

by Raymond Arke, KTA Program Aide

As another budget makes its way through the Pennsylvania legislature, our state parks and trails system are coming under the knife.

In House Bill 218, lawmakers are calling for a \$2.8 million cut to the budget of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). This is paired with an additional cut of \$1.5 million to the operations budgets of our state parks and forests.

Importantly, the Secretary of DCNR, Cindy Dunn, warned that these budget cuts would lead to the elimination of the Pennsylvania Trails Program and other similar grant programs. These grants have always benefited us and continue to presently. Currently KTA has a grant pending with DCNR that would bring in \$30,000 for trail maintenance. Opportunities like that could soon disappear if this budget is passed.

DCNR said that the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, a close partner of KTA, would face staff reductions. This would significantly damage the ability of the bureau and KTA to plan and implement trail projects.

These deep cuts would be devastating to DCNR, severely impairing its ability to maintain the namesake of our state: Penn's Woods. Secretary Dunn stated in a letter to the chairpersons of the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee that the camping season in state parks would be shortened, safety patrols would be reduced, and maintenance would not be kept up.

We urge our members to contact their state senators and representatives to let them know that you care about our state's wonderful parks and trails system. Let them know you oppose House Bill 218. The trails and forests need our help and protection because they offer us special opportunities to know the world and ourselves better. As Henry David Thoreau said, "I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees."

To find and communicate with your state legislator go to:
<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>

Fish and Game Commissions' Hearing Report

by Raymond Arke, KTA Program Aide

On Tuesday, June 20, Joe, Brynn, and I went to the state capitol to attend an informational hearing in the House Game and Fisheries Committee. The hearing featured testimony from the executive director of the PA Fish & Boat Commission, John Arway, and from the executive director of the PA Game Commission, Bryan Burhans.

Both were there to advocate for license fee increases, something KTA supports for the PGC.

The agencies said they needed the fee increases to help stay solvent and continue to do their jobs. The Game Commission told the committee that the money they would receive from the increase would help immensely in continuing to protect and improve wildlife habitats.

Director Burhans also mentioned that the money would help increase elk viewing areas, address West Nile and Lyme Disease, and increase their partnerships with DCNR. Fish and Game both added that the money would assist in continuing and possibly expanding law enforcement.

KTA and all of the Commonwealth's hikers would see a benefit with the proposed budget increases.

Attendance by the representatives on the committee was low, with many of the naysayers absent. Based off voting on Senate Bill 192, which was the bill that would have instituted a fee increase for the PGC and was unsuccessful, it seems most of the committee members remain opposed.

To find and communicate with your state legislator go to: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>

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.

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

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

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

West Rim Trail Volunteers Make It Clear

by Ed Lawrence, KTA Trail Care Chair

This was the third consecutive year that KTA volunteers gathered at Colton Point State Park, Tioga County, to work on the West Rim Trail. Their cumulative efforts have had a significant, positive effect on the hiking experience on this 30-mile trail spanning the edge of Pine Creek Gorge.

The May Trail Care drew 12 participants putting in over 100 hours of work. A lopping crew, consisting of Virginia and John Matthews, Daryl Warren, Henry Bonson, Catherine McLaughlin, and Woody Laudenslager, worked on clearing out sapling growth that was narrowing the corridor between the Refuge Trail access (mile 9) and the Ice Break Trail (mile 14). Special thanks to the Matthews, who attended the Trail Care 101 program earlier in the year and are a welcome addition to the KTA community of dedicated maintainers.

A second crew, consisting of Rick Stibgen, Tony Robbins, Tom Bastian, and Ed Lawrence, ran power brushwhackers, with Mike Sullivan and Mary Ladish following up with loppers. The crew also tackled a section of heavy laurel overgrowth on the trail section north of Bohem Run Falls (mile 26.5) and connected with where work had ended the previous year. This was a sweet, hard-won moment—3 years in the making—to finish clearing a 5-mile trail section overgrown with laurel.

The West Rim Trail was well used that weekend, and the backpackers and hikers passing through the KTA work zones had good words for the work being done. The next step will be for some of those backpackers and hikers to join the effort by attending an upcoming Trail Care event.

...And Then The Bear Ate Our Lunch...

Thunder Swamp Trail Crew Week

by Ed Lawrence, KTA Trail Care Chair

In Delaware State Forest, the main loop of the Thunder Swamp Trail System, bisected by Pennsylvania Route 402 in Pike County, has a lollipop offshoot at its northeast corner that passes by Nebo Swamp, Painter Swamp, Coon Swamp, and Creek Swamp before crossing over Little Bushkill Creek on its way to the main miniature loop around Big Bear Swamp. This was the area that the KTA Trail Crew, in coordination with Recreational Forester Rich Rutan, focused its energy on the week of June 6-11.

Despite early predictions of the week being one long rain shower, the weather turned out to be excellent, with cool temperatures that made for pleasant working conditions by day and necessitated zipped-up sleeping bags at night. The weather allowed the indefatigable tag-team paint crew of Wanda Shirk, Roxanne McMillian, and Mary Ladish to reblaze the entire 8 miles of the orange main trail. While the women were lopping and plying their brushes throughout the week, Tony Robbins, Rick Stibgen, Tom Bastian and Ed Lawrence were trading off duties of clearing blowdowns and running brushcutters. By week's end, KTA's premier sawyer had walked through and cleared deadfalls from all the trail sections east of Route 402, and the trail corridor for the newly blazed lollipop was completely cleared of sapling, blueberry bush and laurel overgrowth. The men also defied expectations by clearing the adjoining (soon-to-be) yellow-blazed Coon Swamp Loop in the Stillwater Natural Area that hadn't seen much upkeep since Carl Windle hung his handmade signs.

Thanks to these KTA volunteers' 218 hours of hard work, this entire part of the Thunder Swamp Trail System is now in excellent condition and eminently hikable. Rich Rutan is also in the process of revamping the signage throughout the system, with new posts already in the ground and waiting for signboards to be completed and bolted on. The crew was again based out of the well-appointed Resica Falls Boy Scout camp, with the kitchen pavilion, menu planning, and food preparation overseen by the multitalented Wanda Shirk. Everyone ate well—including the bear that slipped into camp Saturday night and made off with the last loaf of bread that was meant for bookending Sunday's sandwiches, as well as the snake that ate the frog.

MST Trail Crew: KTA Office Workday

by Raymond Arke, KTA Program Aide

On June 21, the KTA staff performed trail maintenance along the Mid State Trail in Everett, PA. Waking and hitting the road before the sun rose, we made good time, reaching Everett by 7 AM in time to pack our lunch and grab some breakfast.

The trail maintenance crew, led by Debra Dunkle, was friendly and ready to hit the trail. The large group split to cover more ground. Deb split our group of 7 into smaller groups at our work sites. In the morning, Brynn and I were paired up with Tony, a repeat volunteer, and were sent up a side of a mountain. We went along clearing tree branches, re-blazing, and brushcutting on the trail. Meanwhile, Joe was paired up with Debra, Tom, and Carl. They brushed, mowed, and lopped the trailhead at Yellow Creek Bridge.

After reconvening and driving to a different location on the trail, we ate a brown bag lunch and split up again. This time Joe, Brynn, Tom, and Carl headed south along the Mid State Trail. Debra, Tony, and myself went north. Both groups went along blazing, chainsawing blow downs, and clearing brush and branches.

As Debra, Tony, and I were hiking the two miles back to the cars, we were suddenly caught in a massive thunderstorm. The rain was a deluge that left us soaked to the bone! It did help to wash off a day's worth of sweat though.

The day was a success overall and we got quite a lot done! It was a great time and we have to thank Debra and all the volunteers for doing such great work.

Remember, "trails don't maintain themselves" and our trail care program needs your help!

DCNR In Need of Crew Leaders

by Jim Foster, KTA Board Member

The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps, a program offered by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), has an immediate need for crew leaders in Erie, Altoona, Meadville, St. Marys, McConnellsburg, and Reading. Crew leaders need to attend a paid training event in Seattle on June 17, and the flight is paid. If you know of a young person aged 21 or older who needs a great 8-week job this summer, have them call Peter Gernsheimer at 610-451-0335.

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

100-Mile Trail Challenge Profile: Joseph Iole

Full name: Joe Iole

Nickname: Joecho

Age: 33

Hometown: Harrisburg, PA

How long you've been hiking: As long as I can remember.

Earliest memory of hiking or most memorable hiking experience: I grew up in Erie. My parents would often take my brother and I for hikes on Presque Isle (yes, even in the snow).

Why you decided to take the 100-Mile Trail Challenge: I moved to the mid-state about two years ago from Philly and need to make up for some lost time on PA's trails.

Some trails you plan to hike to meet this goal: Right now I'm focused on the AT (Appalachian Trail), but I'm also trying to visit all of the state parks.

Your #1 favorite hiking trail in Pennsylvania, and why it's your favorite: The Susquehannock Trail System -- that was my first excursion longer than 2-3 days and it passed through some of the most beautiful wilderness in PA.

Your favorite thing about hiking: The sounds and smells of the woods.

Who's sponsoring you so far (friends, family, co-workers, hiking club, etc.): My family and friends.

How you heard about KTA or first got involved with KTA: My aunt and uncle talked me into signing up for the KTA Trail Challenge (then the Susquehanna Super Hike) around 2010.

Advice to new hikers: For day-hikes at more popular trail heads, make sure you're there early enough to get a parking spot!

The one thing you'll never hit the trail without: More water than I plan on needing.

Favorite nature/hiking quote (your own or someone else's): Less of a quote and more of a maxim, but -- "carry in, carry out." (As a former park ranger, I can't stress that enough.)

Anything else you'd like to share: My pup Beatrice is a better hiker than I am :)



Jeff's Jaunts: Hiking At The Howland Preserve

by Jeff Mitchell

I've been to the Howland Preserve many times. Volunteers have been working on expanding the trail system, which is open to both hikers and mountain bikers. There are about 8 miles of trails, and more are planned. The trails explore the river, old canal, ravines, woodlands, and diverse forest types...

<https://endlessmountains.wordpress.com/2017/06/12/hiking-at-the-howland-preserve/>

Walk with Gantz: Allegheny Front 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 Allegheny Front Trail (AFT) is a well designed and well built 42 mile trail that encircles Black Moshannon State Park just north of the geographic center of PA. The main trailhead is along route 504 a few miles east of the state park. Most hikers will prefer 3 days to hike this moderate loop, which is known as a great starter backpacking loop. The Moss-Hanne Trail and other trails in this forest allow for various hiking loops and distances for those who don't have time for the whole loop. The trail is maintained by DCNR along with volunteers from the Keystone Trails Association.

Lesson One of the AFT: What the blazes? The AFT is the newest backpacking loop in PA, and although it was originally blazed orange like other PA backpacking trails, the trail is now blazed yellow...or red...sometimes blue...with an occasional old orange blaze mixed in for fun. Since the AFT crosses through a significant section of Black Moshannon State Park (which blazes hiking trails yellow), hikers were getting confused switching from orange to yellow blazes. So now the whole trail is yellow, sections that allow other user groups (horses and bikes) are co-blazed red, and other sections designated for cross country skiing are also blue. Luckily, there are plenty of great trail signs to prevent hikers from losing their way.

The water in this area also comes in multiple colors. Lesson Two: Choose water sources carefully! The slow moving water with beaver activity near in the southern sections of trail may not be the best place to refill your bottles. In addition, the Moshannon Creek (know locally as the "Red Mo") is stained red from abandoned mine drainage and is in fact a dead waterway. It is highly suggested that hikers do not use water from Moshannon Creek! On the other hand, Black Moshannon Creek is naturally stained a dark tea color, and is a living waterway, although still maybe not the best source for hiker water. There is a lot of opportunity to obtain water on this trail, just choose wisely and always treat water to be sure.

Lesson Three: Speaking of water, plan to get wet on the AFT. Significant portions of the trail cross through bogs while other sections of the trail walk beside and cross over streams. Your feet will be wet on this trail almost 12 months out of the year. Most of this is worth it though, especially Black Moshannon Creek, Six Mile Run, Benner Run, and Rock Run.

Lesson Four is the solution to wet feet: Bridges! Multiple bog bridges, boardwalks, and footbridges help to keep hikers' feet dry.

While the AFT does have a handful of significant climbs, the trail overall is considered moderate. Lesson five: Mind the fun vista names! Ralph Seeley played a large roll designing and building the AFT, and a couple of the vistas are named after him. These two vistas look south away from the Allegheny Plateau towards the PA Ridge and Valley region. Enjoy!

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

Backwoods Repair and Other Emergency Kits

by Gerry Rowan

Whether you're tent camping, RVing, or in a cabin many miles from civilization, you should have a basic repair kit handy. The following items are necessary:

- Duct tape (1 roll)

- Masking or craft tape (1 roll)
- Parachute cord (100 feet)
- Thin iron wire (1 roll)
- First aid kit
- Fire starter(s)
- Magnifier or striker fire starter
- Waterproof matches
- Unflavored dental floss and a large needle
- Multi tool
- Disposable rubber gloves
- Plastic zip ties (a variety of sizes)
- 6 leaf-size trash bags
- Aluminum or copper tubing to repair tent poles
- Survival blanket(s) (mirrored Mylar type)
- Folding shovel
- Hand ax
- Folding saw
- Headlamp or flashlight (crank type)
- Small mesh bag for a throw sack

Package these items in a plastic tub with a snap-on lid. The tub will keep everything dry, and you will know precisely where the stuff is when you need it.

In addition to the repair kit, here are survival-type items you should have:

- 8'x10' blue tarp
- Candles
- Fishing kit
- Leather palm work gloves (1 pair)
- Orienting compass
- Ponchos
- Quadrangle maps
- Safety goggles
- Signal mirror
- Snare kit
- Solar-powered weather radio
- Survival whistle
- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes
- Wire saw

Suggested items for an emergency food kit:

- Beef jerky/sticks
- Bottled water
- Canned juice
- Canned nuts or nut mixes
- Canned or foil-packed chicken or tuna
- Crackers

- Fruit rolls
- Hard candy
- Peanut butter and crackers (not premade packets)
- Powdered milk
- Powdered soup mix
- Protein/granola bars
- Vacuum-packed trail mix or gorp

Be sure to include plastic plates and cutlery, as well as a small can opener. Store items in a plastic container. Not all foods are appropriate for everyone, so choose those that fit your needs. Safe storage times vary with each food.

Suggested items for a hygiene kit:

- Baby shampoo
- Bar soap
- Comb
- Dental floss
- Feminine hygiene products
- Hand sanitizer
- Paper towels/terry cloth towels
- Tissues
- Toilet paper
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Wet wipes

Suggested items for a medicine kit:

- Antacid
- Antidiarrhea medication (such as bismuth subsalicylate, loperamide)
- Antifungal and antibacterial ointments/creams
- Antihistamine
- Cough drops/suppressant/expectorant
- Decongestant, alone or in combination with antihistamine
- Hydrocortisone cream
- Laxative
- Moisturizing skin cream
- Motion sickness medication
- Pain- and fever-relieving medication (such as acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen)

A basic first-aid kit should include a quick-reference first-aid card, along with a digital thermometer, antiseptics, bandages, cotton-tipped applicators, gauze, scissors, and tweezers. Other items to consider:

- Ace bandage(s)
- Aloe vera gel/ointment for sunburn
- Bandana for arm sling, etc.
- Hand sanitizer
- Insect repellent

- Moleskin for blisters
 - Oral rehydration solution packets
 - Sunscreen
-

Afternoon Adventures Along the Rocky Knob Trail

by Dominik Maida

Spring is a glorious time in central Pennsylvania. On the morning of June 3, 2017, my fiancée and I went for a relaxing hike along the Rocky Knob Trail in Michaux State Forest. We started the trek around 11:00, parking along a dirt road directly across from the trailhead. The surrounding forest was beautiful, with the trees fully leafed out and not a soul in sight.

As we started at a brisk pace, the path ahead of us was relatively straight and easy to maneuver. To the left and right, the forest was covered in blooming mountain laurel. Each bush was unique, with the flowers varying from full bloom to still shy, hiding behind closed petals. We reached the intersection of the Appalachian Trail within half a mile, pausing briefly to exchange pleasantries with some folks who were resting. Shortly ahead, the time came to choose our path as we reached the circular Rocky Knob Trail: either take the right fork or follow to the left. We decided to go left and hike the trail clockwise.

The Rocky Knob Trail began as quite the easy and enjoyable hike. We walked on a windy, well-marked trail that took us through an open forest. The mountain laurel never ceased to amaze us as we walked past. In typical Pennsylvania fashion, about a mile in, the trail soon became rocky. Speaking as a novice to hiking, this trail was certainly not anything too difficult (and I only managed to stub my toes about half a dozen times). As we passed through a rocky, steep decline, my fiancée called out for me to stop. Looking back, she pointed to distant hills and a lake to the left of the trail. As we stood there in admiration of the beauty of Mother Nature, I learned a valuable lesson: take the time to look up and enjoy one's surroundings (and don't forget to stop and smell the mountain laurel).

Once we passed the steep decline, we hiked along a ridge, with the ground falling steeply away to the left. We passed several camping sites, with evidence of fire pits and logs serving as benches. We stopped for lunch on the 4-mile loop after about 2 and a half miles. We chose to wander a few hundred yards off-trail and climb an impressive pile of boulders to get a better view of the landscape. After eating our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and carrots (and keeping an eye on a vulture that had swooped down near us, hoping, perhaps, for a snack), my fiancée and I hiked on, keeping an eye on the ground for loose stones and jutting roots.

As we made the turn for the last mile, the home stretch, we passed a side trail to the left, marking an alternate adventure that led down to the aforementioned lake. Perhaps, if we return, we'll explore the lake. The last mile or so of the Rocky Knob Trail is mostly open and sloping ever so slightly upward. Here we saw more mountain laurel in bloom. However, many of flowers displayed their petals in hues of purple and pink in addition to the ever-present waves of white.

Thankful for our CamelBak, the trees overhead let in a good deal of afternoon sun. As we returned to the starting point and walked toward the car, I was struck by how serene and peaceful the trail was. While it took my fiancée and I about 2 hours to complete, the Rocky Knob Trail offered a refreshing getaway, with few hikers and a balanced mix of intermediate and easy pathways. Should you decide to visit this fine section of Michaux State Forest and want a bit of a challenge, I recommend hiking the trail counterclockwise to throw in a few short but steep inclines. Fortunately, you're unlikely to get lost on this trail, as there are 12 markers along the way corresponding to the Michaux State Forest map. In addition, the trail is clearly marked with orange blazes. (Go Syracuse!)

Located reasonably close to Carlisle, Mechanicsburg, Harrisburg, Gettysburg, Shippensburg, and Chambersburg, I sincerely hope you get the opportunity and blessing to experience this fantastic trail.

Acreage Added to Game Lands

Published in Pennsylvania Game Commission News Release #43-17

The Game Commission-owned tract is located with Lower Towamensing Township, Carbon County, and Moore Township, Northampton County, and is bisected by the Appalachian Trail. The Park Service-owned tract is located entirely within Eldred Township, Monroe County, and does not contain any portion of the Appalachian Trail, but contains a 100-foot-wide overhead electric transmission right-of-way.

The primary purpose of the exchange is to encourage responsible future energy-corridor development, namely natural gas and petroleum pipelines, across Blue Mountain and State Game Lands 168. By allowing for pipeline or utility co-location along the existing right-of-way, additional forest fragmentation can be avoided.

Co-location within the existing corridor also would minimize future adverse impacts to the Appalachian Trail, which is located on or near the summit throughout this area.

Meanwhile, hunters and trappers also benefit from the exchange creating a sole connection between northern and southern tracts of State Game Lands 168 in this area.

With the exception of the existing overhead transmission line, the tracts approved for exchange both consist of typical dry oak mixed hardwood forest ranging in age from about 80 to 125 years.

CLUB CONNECTION

Submit Events to the 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!

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!

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

August 5-15: KTA Treks and Trails International Fundraising Trip to Iceland

September 9: KTA Trail Challenge 25k and 50k

September 15 - 17: Tuscarora Trail Care

September 29 - October 1: Reeds Gap Spur Trail Care

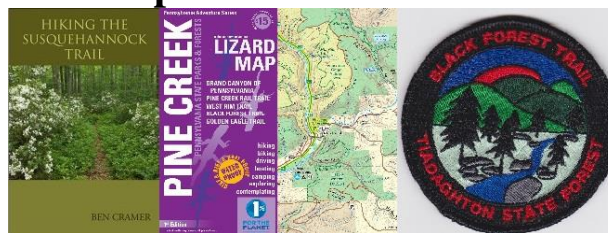
September 29 - October 1: Quehanna Elk Quest

October 7: Gifford Pinchot State Park Code Orange

October 13-15: KTA's Fall Hiking Weekend, Weikert, PA

November 3 - 5: Bucktail Path Trail Care

Shop the KTA Bookstore



Check out KTA's latest additions: Hiking the Susquehannock Trail, Purple Lizard Maps, and 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>

Amazon Smile

The next time you shop online, use Amazon Smile and choose Keystone Trails Association. It doesn't cost you any extra: Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Keystone Trails Association.

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.