



January 2021

Merry Christmas and

Happy New Year!

(And may 2021 be better for all!)

No Regular First Saturday Work Trip in January

We are still on break from our regular first Saturday work trips for December, January and February. Clingmans Dome Rd. is closed. As weather and Trail conditions allow, and of course as you desire, sections can always use work, no matter what time of year! Stay safe, healthy and warm!

Congratulations to the following Maintainers!

Each year the Appalachian Trail Maintainers Committee of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club recognizes volunteers who have provided exceptional volunteer service for our prior fiscal year, October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020. Normally, we would announce these awards at our December Club banquet, which unfortunately had to be cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are the maintainers who have earned awards this year, based on work and travel hours (excludes administrative hours).

SMHC cap or medal (hours in 1 year; caps for new winners, medals given for repeat gold or platinum earners)

Bronze cap (25 hours): **Randy Bullock, Sunaree Bullock, Gene Desrosiers, Melanie Harmon, Tracy Kressler, Michael Roque, Rick Waggener, Elizabeth Weikert.**

Silver cap (50 hours): **Patti Grady, Charlie McDonald**

Gold cap: (100 hours): **Dick Kettle (medal), Terry Martin (medal), Randy Mitchell (new), Bill Pyle (Medal).**



Platinum cap: (200 hours): **Taylor Weatherbee (medal)**

ATC patch or cap (cumulative hours since start of volunteering)

ATC Patch (100 hours): **Jay Schmid**

ATC Cap (500 hours): **Randy Mitchell, Taylor Weatherbee**

Please know **how much** your work means to the National Appalachian Scenic Trail, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Nantahala National Forest, both in facilitating matching federal funds, and for the preservation and enjoyment of the Trail. Awards are being mailed to you. A separate email will be sent to those eligible for the a National Parks Pass based on volunteer hours. **Thank you all!!**

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Welcome 2021 Season Ridgerunners!

We are pleased to extend a warm welcome to the following people who will be our 2021 ATC Ridgerunners on the A.T. in the Smokies:

Sophia Tigges is originally from Atlanta, and has always loved spending as much time outside as possible. After graduating with a B.S. in Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences, they jumped straight into teaching marine science aboard tallships. They worked as an educator, deckhand, and naturalist while sailing in San Francisco Bay, the Gulf of California, and Puget Sound. They most recently worked to map the seafloor as a hydrographic survey technician at NOAA. They are passionate about environmental education and stewardship, and they are excited to spend some time on land while hiking along the beautiful A.T.! Sophia will serve as the long-season Ridgerunner in the Smokies.



Sophia Tigges

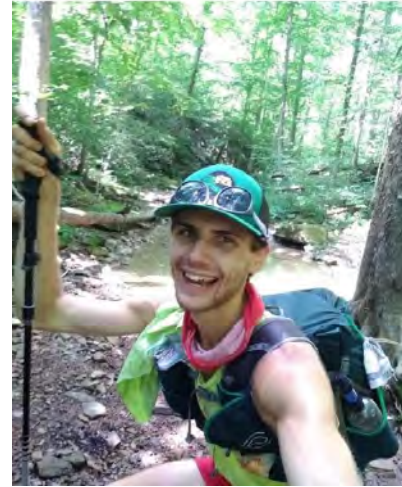
Yael Girard has always loved the outdoors, from early years of eating sand on the beach, to hiking the mountains of the world. Yael most recently worked as an EMT on the California wildfires. Prior to that she spent 5 years as the director of a small land trust in coastal Alabama. When not outdoors, you can find her painting, cooking, and reading in her 1978 Toyota Chinook. Yael will serve as a short-season Ridgerunner in the Smokies.



Yael Girard

Ricky Vandegrift grew up on a small hobby farm with in Bethel, OH where he raised a variety of cows, horses, goats, chickens, pigs, dogs, and of course random barn cats. His first backpacking trip was when he was 12 with his best friend and his family. This inspired numerous weekend trips which eventually led to a thru-hike of The Sheltowee Trace Trail and a 2017 NOBO hike of the Appalachian Trail. On his thru-hike of the A.T., he remembers meeting a Ridgerunner on his first day in the Smokies and thinking that it would be the coolest job out there but that it would probably never work for me. Fast forward, he went to Hocking College for Wildlife Management and was then blessed by becoming a 2019 New Jersey Ridgerunner. He truly loves helping people form deeper connections with nature and a better understanding of how to care for the resources. Most of

his pastimes involve walking or running really far. When he's not getting the miles in, you'll find him baking bread, experimenting with fermenting sodas, or attempting to play banjo. Ricky will serve as the Fontana Ridgerunner in the Smokies.



Ricky Vandegrift

Welcome to all, and we look forward to working with you this coming year!

Appalachian Trail Maintainers helping with ATC Parametric Scoring

The Parametric Scoring System is a method of scoring the status of all of the assets on the A.T. For us, this includes shelters, privies, a small number of parking areas, and the Trail itself, as well as side trails (like to a shelter, parking lot, or water source). Each item is scored based on its condition, like the roof, walls, fireplace, and interior. This allows calculation of the Parametric Deferred Maintenance, which is a fraction of the CRV (Current Replacement Value). The intent is to be able to report to Congress the A.T.-wide need for deferred maintenance which would then have an impact on allocation of funds. This is now even more relevant with passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, which allocates federal funds for deferred maintenance projects in National Parks and other federal lands. Understanding this scoring system is an undertaking in itself, as is in-putting the data. Our big thanks to Dick Kettle and Ann Farrar who created an on-line platform for organizing our data and participated in the meetings with Stephen Eren of the ATC. Additional great thanks to Philip Royer, Ed Fleming, and Taylor Weatherbee who provided input on structure integrity.

A. T. Work Trips from 11/16/2020 to 12/15/2020

11/16 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Did some season ending waterbar cleaning prior to the Clingmans Dome Rd closure. Installed 2 steps and reset one step. Checked on Mt Collins shelter and privy in anticipation of the parametric meeting this Friday.

11/17 - Randy Mitchell - Low Gap to Cosby Knob Top - Cleared all waterbars in section of leaves and silt. Removed fallen branches from treadway. Fortunately no trees had fallen in the section. I also worked on making a path for the water flowing from a few seeps north of the shelter spur. Leaves and rocks had clogged the previous channel made allowing water to puddle on the trail. Checked Cosby Knob shelter. The tarp was up and there was no trash in the shelter. There was a Columbia jacket left lying on the sleep platform. I carried it to the junction of the spur trail and left it at the sign to pick up on my return from the end of the section. When I returned the jacket was gone. This was surprising since I didn't meet anyone on the AT. The privy was in good shape. The first bin on the left is full but working. The throne is currently in the center position with the bin about 1/2 full. I knocked down the cone and added some mulch and several handfuls of leaves. I also filled the two metal buckets with mulch and filled a broken plastic bucket with leaves. The mulch bin is only about 10% full. This time I was able to open both the mulch bin and the tool box. There was some trash and a pair of burned gloves and burned sock in the metal fire ring downhill from the shelter. I packed out the trash.

11/17 - Rick Waggener - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Finished with waterbars for the winter. The Boulevard/A.T. sign was down (it had been loose for some time). I reset it and secured it so that it does no longer moves.

11/18 - Adam Beal, Amanda Beal, Barbara Allen, Don Dunning, Nancy Dunning, Edward Fleming, John H Gassler, Stephanie Gose, Dick Ketelle, Kristi Knight, Franklin LaFond, Terry Martin, Randy Mitchell, Diane Petrilla, Bill Pyle, Philip Royer, Janet Snyder, Mark Snyder, Cindy Spangler, Lisa Sumter, Taylor Weatherbee - Club Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Attendance at ATMC meeting; multiple issues discussed.

11/18 - Patti Grady, Diane Petrilla, Eric Keller - Indian Gap/Rd Pr Tr to Rd Prng/Tom Prng Lead - Finished cleaning all the waterbars on this section. It is ready for the winter!

11/18 - Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle - Spruce Fir to Sugarland Mt Tr - Hiked around a little to find a large

blowdown that we finally located around 0.5 miles north of the Spruce Fir Gap entry. Used crosscut to remove a 27 inch spruce blowdown from the trail. Did not encounter any hikers, but did run across 3 other maintainers.



Great work Taylor and Bill! (photos courtesy of Taylor Weatherbee)

11/19 - Pete Berntsen - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Cleared water control devices and cleared minor blowdown twigs on entire route. Minor clearing of six water drains and reinstallation of one waterbar rock on section from Newfound Gap to Sweat Heifer trail. Cleaned 16 waterbars between Sweat Heifer and The Boulevard which completes project to clear all water bars in this section. Cleaned all waterbars from The Boulevard to Icewater Spring Shelter. (Rick previously cleared from the spring to Masa Knob.) To address Ricks' concern of trail that was washed down the hill, I built a retaining wall of about 25 feet in height and reclaimed most of the trail width. I also dug the main drain across the trail deeper to help keep water from the reclaimed area. Repaired drain which diverts water from in front of Icewater Shelter. Received help from two overnight campers to install well-worn tarp. The tarp

should make it through this season but I expect that it will need to be replaced next year.



Repair in progress



Repair completed (photos courtesy of Pete Berntsen)

11/19 - Taylor Weatherbee, Bill Pyle, Rick Hughes - Spence (Bote Mt Tr) to Russell Field - Cut a 14 inch oak blowdown located halfway between the shelters. Rick cleaned out 54 water bars starting at Russell. Some of these were waterbars that Jerry Troxler didn't have time to get to earlier this month. We used polyurethane caulking to try to fix the leaks in the Spence roof. We brought a box of 5/16 X2 inch galvanized lag bolts to replace broken ones in the Spence privy. However, the broken off bolts were around the new (middle) location of the throne. I thought it might be best to try to remove the broken off bolts when the throne is moved next to the far left location. I left the box of lag bolts in the far right corner of the tool box. There is a ratchet wrench with the required 1/2 inch socket in the left mulch bin. A vice grip may help get the broken bolts out per Ed Fleming.

11/20 - Phyllis Henry - AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Participated in interview of potential Ridgerunners for Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

11/21 - Joseph ("Randy") Bullock, Sunaree Bullock - Brown Fork Gap to Stekoah Gap - Walked section from Stekoah Gap to .5 miles beyond Browns Fork Gap shelter water source. Removed six blowdowns with saw. Picked up litter and inspected shelter.

11/22 - Dick Ketelle - Dry Sluice Gap to Boulevard Tr - Cleared waterbars and drains between Dry Sluice Gap Jct and gap south of Masa Knob. Re-graded tread where a wet-weather stream draining east slope of Jump Off crosses trail. Met Pete Berntsen at the small stream below Spring at Icewater and we worked together to replace a rock water diversion where that prevents high flows from running down the trail that can cause trail washout. Repaired the metal straps on toolbox lid to prevent lid from flopping over on the ground that would damage the hinge on the lid.

11/22 - John H Gassler - Davenport Gap to 1 mi N of Cam (4250' EI) - Cleared all branches, vines, and trees (except for one, see below) off trail for entire 4 miles. Cut back some uphill foliage on my section.

11/22 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Lowered a locust waterbar which was high due to erosion on both (upper-lower) sides of locust. Revisited new steps to add more side rocks to keep the bank from eroding, and forcing the hiker to use the steps. Widened and deepened a drainage ditch that had already started to fill in with loose stones. (Cleared two weeks before.) Widened trail in two places, using a sledge to break up boulders. Removed leaves again on first .2 of a mile from NFG which is open to southerly winds.

11/22 - Pete Berntsen - Gap W of Masa Knob to Boulevard Tr - Doubled support of area that was reinforced on 11/19/20 with materials that were no longer frozen. Redirected water flow from support and reinforced support with large logs that had washed into ravine. Dick Ketelle joined me and we installed a large rock water diversion to prevent high flow of water from proceeding down the trail to cause washout. Reset three rock steps that had washed out about 200 feet NE of the spring. Major repair of fully overgrown water drain located about 100 ft. NE of the spring. Made support and reinstalled bottom log step and added a rock step.



A lot of work done on a very problematic area! (photos courtesy of Pete Berntsen)

11/22 - Scott McClure, Bert Emmerson - Derrick Knob Shelter - Cleaned up all the garbage and tents that were left throughout the season at the shelter. Cut down all the strings that had been tied at the shelter to dry clothes with and carried all that material out. Cleaned gutters at the shelter, cleaned out fireplace. After we completed work at the shelter I headed south on the A.T. cleaning drainage ditches and water bars out to the end of the top headed to Sugartree Gap. Then came back the shelter and cleaned drainage back to Greenbriar Ridge Trail. Camped overnight in the shelter just Burt Emmerson and myself, no other visitors.

11/22 - Taylor Weatherbee - Sugarland Mt Tr to Collins Gap - Did the final waterbar cleaning. Now all are good until spring. Also built one stone step, and replaced one rotten waterbar with wood I found on site. Hiker reported that the Collins shelter site was packed last night, but only 2 people stayed inside.

11/24 - John H Gassler - Davenport Gap to 1 mi N of Cam (4250' EI) - Cleared blowdown south of Davenport

Gap shelter I reported from my 11/22 trip. Cut back rhododendron on my section. Cleared several leaners and low-clearance trees between Chestnut Branch trail and Lower Mt. Cammerer trail on my way out. Cleaned leaves from some waterbars along the way out.

11/28 - Bill Pyle, Kelly Conway - Collins Gap to Mt Love - Cleared all waterbars, removed some smaller tree clutter at edges of the trail, and placed some rock to fill in boggy area.

11/29 - Mark Snyder, Janet Snyder - Sweat Heifer to Newfound Gap - Lowered two stone waterbars, which due to erosion on both sides, appeared to be growing upward out of trail. Was able to split the slabs of stone into thinner slabs, enabling the other large slabs to become 2 steps which were dragged where they were needed.

12/3 - Dick Ketelle, Ann Farrar, Philip Royer, Taylor Weatherbee, Edward Fleming - AT Mgt, Mtgs & Admin - Participated in web meeting with ATC/ATPO for training on the AT Structures Parametric database input. Ann Farrar and Dick Ketelle created a website area that captures the information and photos collected by SMHC volunteers for our shelters and privies between Davenport Gap and Double Springs Gap and has pages for the other shelters not yet fully assessed. Conducted a web meeting to populate our draft of the parametric scoring spreadsheet provided by ATC/ATPO for all shelters and privies between Wesser, NC and Davenport Gap TN/NC.

12/6 - John H Gassler - Davenport Gap to Mt Cammerer Side Tr - Cleared downed branches and trees from trail. Cleared all low-clearance overhanging trees. Trimmed vegetation between Lower Mt. Cammerer trail and Mt. Cammerer side trail.

12/6 - Lisa Sumter, Stephanie Gose, Melanie Miller, Jerry Miller, Barbara Allen - Davenport Gap to Chestnut Br Trail - Cleaned all the water drainages. Near the shelter cleaned pipe and spring to get water flowing. Checked shelter and picked up a lot of toilet paper that someone had let the mice have. Thanks John and Sam who cut the downed trees on this section.

12/11 - John H Gassler - Lower Mt Cammerer Tr to 1 mi N of Cam (4250' EI) - Cleared debris from trail. Trimmed vegetation on my section.

12/13 - John H Gassler - Davenport Gap to 1 mi N of Cam (4250' EI) - Removed downed tree, vines, and branches and trimmed encroaching rhododendron along the way. Removed low overhanging branches and trimmed vegetation on my section.