

Ah, the Memories

July proved a quite "historic" month for the Maryland Outdoor Club. We had 4th of July celebrations, a Civil War battlefield hike, Appalachian Trail visits, an evening of Shakespeare and our own birthday party to commemorate.

Monocacy Battlefield Day Hike

Organizer: Colin Babb

Colin put on another great battlefield hike, drawing on his extensive knowledge of history to entertain the group with tales of this little-known but highly important fight, the Confederacy's last push to take Washington, DC. On this 140th anniversary weekend, hikers also got to see re-enactors demonstrate cannon firing, an intricate choreography requiring at least six people. The visitors' center also had some fun dioramas depicting the movement of troops, complete with sound effects. Oh yes, there was also a nice hike around the battlefield and talk of how the terrain had changed over the ensuing years. Some bored but very hot cows provided another bit of comic relief for the afternoon. Everything was capped off with lunch in Frederick, and we even managed to get the whole 10-car caravan to the restaurant!



Left: Are you ready for some culture? Everyone mugs while waiting for the show to begin Right: Are you ready for some grub? Gallant cooks prepare food for the masses.

Shakespeare and Annapolis Pub Crawl

Organizer: Colin Babb

Historian and history buff Colin also organized a trip to see a local production of "Taming of the Shrew" at an outdoor theater in Maryland's capital. Both the weather and the performance got mixed reviews from the MOC crowd, as started the pub crawl early when rain began before intermission and those that stayed weren't sure they were convinced the play was a comedy. The pub crawl, however, got rave reviews, with things not winding up for some until the wee hours.

2nd Anniversary Picnic

Organizer: Amy Pickwick

Though multiple canines joined in the festivities, even partly cloudy skies didn't let this event go to the dogs. Plenty of cooks served up a great variety of food, and plenty of MOC members went away with door prizes. Both past and future events came up for discussion as befits such a celebration of two highly successful years of this fabulous group. Here's to many more anniversaries to celebrate with our friends.

News You Can Use

Inside this Issue:

Jeff Schneider shares some of his extensive knowledge of the Appalachian Trail on Page 2. Page 3 features some tips for selecting and breaking in hiking boots from Member Barry Marsh. Find out what you need to know about Snakeheads on page 4. And as always, check the Member Bulletin Board on page 4 for members looking to form smaller interest groups or swap gear.

Openings Within the MOC For Officers

Contact us if you are interested in taking on one of these positions or helping out in any way with the club. These positions are ultimately given to the candidate with the best fit, and are appointed by the current officers of the club. All of these positions are volunteer-based and are what you make of them. Most positions can be handled on your own schedule.

Controller - This is a time intensive position. Need someone that is good with QuickBooks, accounting, taxes, etc. Will record intake and outtake of club funds as a whole.

Event Accountant - Need someone good with Excel, accounting. Will track intake and outtake of events.

Web Assistant - Need someone that is good at Photoshop, and light HTML. This person will be responsible for updating the slideshow(s) of images on the home page of the site. Other duties will be defined over time.

Social Coordinator - Primarily will be in charge of our monthly Social Hour event.

Safety & Equipment Rental Coordinator - Will manage club equipment allocation.

Legal Coordinator - Must be a member of the Maryland Bar. Will help us with legal documentation, etc.

Upcoming Events



Tue, August 10 @ 7 PM

Social Hour, Red Robin Restaurant
Columbia, MD

Sat, August 14 @ 9:45 AM

Whitewater Tubing
Harper's Ferry, WV

Sat, August 14 @ 9:30 AM

Bike Ride on NCR trail to York, PA
Freeland, MD to York, PA

Sun, August 15 @ 10 AM

Difficult Hike (Whiteoak Canyon)
Shenandoah National Park, VA

Sat, August 21 @ 11 AM

Difficult AT Hike (Chimney Rocks)
Rouzeville, PA

Sat-Sun August 21-22 @ 9 AM

Brewery Tour/Camping/Hiking Wknd.
Schuylkill County, PA

Sun, August 22 @ 2 PM

Easy-Mod.Hike (Patapsco Valley)
Washington, DC

Sun, August 29 @ 10:30 AM

Difficult Hike - GWNF (Duncan Knob)
Edinburg, VA

Fri-Mon, Sept. 3-6 @ 4:30 PM

Hiking/Camping/Alpine Sliding Wknd
Killington, VT

Fri-Sun, Sep 17-19 @ 11:30 AM

Nightfall Rappel/Gauley Rafting Wknd
Fayetteville, WV

Fri-Sun, Sep 24-26 @ 5:30 PM

Wilderness Survival Weekend
George Washington National Forest,
VA

For more info on upcoming events,
please visit the "Events" section of
our web site.

The Appalachian Trail

by Jeff Schneider

(First in a two-part series).



"The Appalachian Trail – The True Spirit of America"

A German woman shared this observation in a trail register in Southern Pennsylvania. It's a pretty bold statement - the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) is merely a long footpath that extends from Maine to Georgia.

Why would someone have this impression of the Trail? What makes it unique?

Start with the history. In an October 1921 edition of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, New England hiker Benton MacKaye features the article "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning". This article introduced Mackaye's dream of a trail connecting the ridgetops of the Appalachian Mountains – from New England to the Southeastern United States. His idea was to "extend the primeval environment and to set bounds to the metropolitan environment".

MackKaye didn't stop with the article. Along with government and volunteer trail groups, a continuous trail was created. Thirteen years after Mackaye's article appeared, nearly 2000 miles of trail has been blazed. America's first national scenic trail became a reality.

The A.T. has been always been maintained by volunteer clubs along the east coast.

Currently, there are 31 clubs responsible for the Trail, including the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, which maintains the trail in Maryland and parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia. In addition, the A.T. has benefited from the U.S. Government: In 1968, the National Trails System Act was passed. This provides federal protection for many trails, including the A.T.

It is an understatement to say that the creators of the A.T. picked a good place to lay out a trail. Consider all the scenic and significant sites. Katahdin Mountain, the Northern terminus of the A.T., was a favorite spot of Henry Thoreau. Mt. Washington in New Hampshire's White Mountains is the highest peak in the Northeast U.S., and the site of the highest recorded wind speed in history. The Long Trail in Vermont is America's oldest long-distance trail (it came before the A.T.). And of course, Shenandoah and Great Smokey Mountains National Park, through which a great deal of the trail passes.

There are also some lesser known, but equally impressive locations on the A.T. Mount Rogers in Southwest Virginia features wild ponies and breathtaking views – most notably from the 3400 ft. McAfee Knob. Also in Southwest Virginia is the town of Damascus, which has garnered the reputation of "The Friendliest Town on the Trail". Every May, the "Trail Days" hiking festival is held in Damascus. In upstate New York, the trail runs right through Bear Mountain Zoo, where thru-hikers are given free admission.

In our next issue: Thru-hikers, notable thru-hikers, local spots on the A.T. and books on the A.T.

Jeff Schneider grew up hiking the trail from his home base in Maryland. He has led several MOC hikes along the trail and was featured in the Member Spotlight in the May 2004 issue of the Monthly Explorer.

How to Buy Hiking Boots

by Barry Marsh

Long before your first serious hike, start shopping around for hiking boots. Figure out what type of boots you really need - there are different types and weights for light hiking and daytrips, moderate backpacking on the trail and over rougher terrain, and extended backpacking and mountaineering expeditions. Ask for recommendations at outdoor stores and among your friends. Take a look at online sources and maybe the "Gearfinder" at <http://www.Backpacker.com> to compare types and get recommendations. Consider the water-repellant and waterproof nature, breathability, support, strength, and weight factors of the different types of materials and construction.

You may find some great deals buying hiking boots online or through a catalog, but you absolutely must try boots on in real life before buying. So - off to the outdoor store! At the store, have your feet measured and buy a couple of pairs of good hiking socks and put them on. Consider wearing two pairs of socks for extra padding - perhaps a nice, soft synthetic or silk blend for against your foot and a good old thick, wool sock over that. Buy socks that extend a couple inches above the tops of the boots, maybe mid-calf length. Don't even consider cotton athletic socks, as they generally lack the padding, ventilation, and smooth soles of quality hiking socks.

Now try on and lace up some pairs of boots (try both boots - not just one!). And really try them on! Climb the fake rocks at the store, and jump on and off the benches. Run around a bit, squat, kneel, and bend. Grab a backpack off the rack, fill it with heavy stuff, put it on, and run around some more (or even better - bring your own pack along!). Don't be afraid to make a fool of yourself - the store employees have seen it all before. Do the boots feel snug, but not too binding? Do they pinch anywhere (especially at the toes), and are

there any folds, seams, or creases in the interior construction that could become uncomfortable? Do your feet slide forward in the boots when you climb down the fake rock? Do the boots give good ankle support, but without feeling as stiff as ski boots? If the boots feel too loose or too tight, adjust the laces, then see how they feel. If they still don't seem quite right, try a half-size smaller or larger or a different model boot. How about arch support? Some manufacturers sell removable arch inserts to properly "pad out" boots to fit your feet more precisely, so if the boots feel loose at the arches try these on, too. Are the boots too heavy? Too light? Can you imagine yourself wearing them for a day, a weekend, even a week in the backcountry? Another hint: Your feet change size and shape throughout the day and with activity, so think about trying on boots a few different times. Are the eyes, grommets, and hooks the laces pass through solidly attached, and do they feel sharp, like they might cut through the laces? Are the boots solidly constructed - good stitching and glue, with nothing loose or uneven? Is the tread deep enough to give good traction?

After very careful consideration and testing, buy the best-fitting and best-constructed pair of boots you can. They won't be cheap, but the extra expense of a great boot is definitely worth it to keep you and your feet happy on the trail. (*Ed. note - often the boots come with a long-term warranty so if you care for them, they should be an investment that lasts a long while.*) Oh - and remember to pick up an extra pair or two of laces. And while you have your credit card out, buy some more socks.

Now bring your new boots home and torture them. Bend them every which way you can. Stomp on the toes and ankles and squash them down. Get them wet. (Then dry them, but slowly - not in the dryer and not in front of a fire, but with the tops wide open and maybe some crumpled newspaper or paper towels inside to absorb moisture.) Run around the yard and up and down the stairs. Wear

them for household chores and to the store. Climb a rock, climb a tree. Play a game of soccer. Do this a few times a week for a couple of weeks. If the manufacturer recommends any kind of treatment like extra waterproofing, slather or spray it on, and work it in as needed. If you haven't tortured your boots, your boots will torture your feet...

Ready to put your new footwear to the test? Good! Make sure your toenails are neatly trimmed - what looks like a little hangnail or the start of an ingrown nail now will become worse on the trail. Take care of any corns or bunions, covering them with foam pads or moleskin as needed. When your feet are dry (it's best to never put socks and shoes on over damp or wet feet, as blistering is much more likely), put your new socks and boots on. Some people like to put on a nice medicated powder, too, like Gold Bond. Then go on a hike or two! Not a marathon, but a nice, local day hike, a few miles around the park over some varying terrain. Do the boots feel good? After your first short hikes, check your feet carefully for any sore spots or blisters, and figure out what you can do to prevent injuries on future hikes. Try different socks, or maybe adjust the laces or tongue. When you and your boots are ready for your first real hike or backpacking trip, bring along a small first aid kit with some bandages, moleskin, and antibacterial ointment. If you get a blister on the trail, don't pop it - cover it carefully and adjust your socks and boots to prevent further injury.

The trail is calling - now get out there and hike!

Thanks, Barry, for a great outline of the necessary steps to ensure comfy feet and safety while hiking or backpacking. Got any advice about selecting gear? Submit it to me and we'll work it into an upcoming issue. This article runs about 1000 words but you certainly don't need to write that much - 350 words will easily fill a column, and think of how much thanks you'll get for sharing your experiences and saving others time and possibly trouble!

Monthly Statistics

As of August 1st

1903 - Total Members To Date
105 - July New Members
60% - Female Members
40% - Male Members
32.4 - Average Member Age

Organize an Event

It's simple, fun to do, and gives you great leadership experience that you can use on your resume. If it sounds like something for you, please let us know.

events@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Save a Tree

If you are done with this issue, please consider throwing it in your paper recycle bin instead of into a trash can.

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August 2004

What's With Snakeheads? Join the MOC - It's Free!

Not sure what to think of all the news about Snakeheads? Snakeheads are an invasive species, a type of fish native to Africa and Asia that have recently shown up in the Potomac. If left unchecked, they could drive out native species and generally wreak havoc on the ecosystem. They cannot walk, but can wriggle through grass as they can breathe air directly.

If you find a snakehead, bring the fish to the Department of Natural Resources. To help track the fish, be sure to note exact capture location, habitat (grass bed, submerged structure, hard versus soft bottom . . .) lure or bait, depth, time of day, and tidal stage. You'll receive a "Maryland DNR Snakehead Wrangler Hat and plenty of media attention."

For more information, visit:

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/dnrnews/infocus/snakehead.asp>

Member Bulletin Board

The MOC does not maintain a bulletin board on its web site because it's too hard to monitor, so we've made it a feature of the newsletter. Use this area to hook up a team for a race, get a group together for a special event that wouldn't necessarily be an MOC event, or to do other networking.

Got a post for the board? Email explorer@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Mountain Biking Group

Courtney Cotton of Belcamp is looking for mountain bikers for rides all over the DC/Baltimore area. Rides are of varying difficulty, so all are welcome. Most require basic mountain biking skills, but novices should contact her for potential beginner sessions.

Log on to the Member Network in the Member Area of the web site to contact these members for details.

The Maryland Outdoor Club conducts all administrative tasks through our web site to cut down on processing time & costs. If you are interested in signing up for membership, you need to go to marylandoutdoorclub.org and click on any of the "Join Now" buttons you'll find throughout the site. Signing up is a relatively short process and will save you time later on when you sign up for events and don't need to re-enter all of your information.

The MOC does not sell or share your personal information with any third-party.

Ads & Classifieds

Your business can reach hundreds of potential customers each month with an ad in exchange for bartered items/goods. Contact the editor for details. MOC members can sell single used items or place notices. Classifieds are \$5.00 per 25 words or less.

Editor's Corner

Big apologies go to Jeff Schneider as I overlooked his article on the Appalachian Trail last month. By no means am I rejecting submissions from anyone, members or non-members! I continue to be fortunate in the amount of material submitted to me, which I think does you guys a better service as you get to know the interests and expertises of other club members, rather than just listening to me blather for several pages. So, as always, I want to hear what you have to say. Any advice? Great or strange or terrible outdoors-related experiences, with or outside the club? All are fair game.

-Katie Stofer

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