



**Carolina Mountain Club**

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December 2021

## **Max Patch Update and National Public Lands Day Report**

by Paul Curtin

Much good has happened this year at Max Patch, and quite a lot of it is due to the work of CMC members. Most of you would have seen the devastating drone picture taken last fall of the tent city on top. Since the Forest Service order implemented July 1, 2021, the situation has changed drastically. Here is the first picture and then one taken a year later from a similar vantage point. What a difference!



Much of the progress is due to the diligence of our Trail Ambassadors. They are out nearly every nice weekend patrolling, educating hikers, reporting data needed for decision-making, removing trash, and representing CMC, the USFS, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. The data they collected was crucial in obtaining the transformational Forest Order of July 1. Growing from a base of 8 in 2019 we now have about 20. We are always in need of more help in this area. Contact Paul Curtin at [pmc Curtin@hotmail.com](mailto:pmc Curtin@hotmail.com) if you want to get involved. Training will be held in the spring. We also need a program leader. This program will be needed for many years if not forever.

In the 41 patrols conducted in 2021 nearly 6000 people and 1300 cars were observed and the TAs engaged with 2800 people! Since July 1 most patrols have seen 0 or 1 tent

on top with a max of 4, and no cars illegally parked. The social trails and fire rings are disappearing. The TAs have also been instrumental in helping improve the signage to keep hikers on trail, inform them of the new regulations, and prevent resource damage. They have also started a Max Patch donation fund that has raised over \$2500 for improvements like gravel and signage.

## National Public Lands Day

WOW! What a great day we had at Max Patch on Sept 25th. 55 volunteers took on a variety of tasks around the bald, led by experienced CMC workers. We even had a tractor out to help with moving gravel, courtesy of Phillip Kendall. Work completed, including prework and follow-up by the Asheville Thursday and Friday crews included:

- Improved 200 feet of tread on the northbound approach to Max Patch.
- Rebuilt 97 steps on the northbound staircase, added side cribs, and covered with gravel to harden the trail .
- Added 11 steps to the southbound descent and gravel to reduce erosion and improve hiker safety on wet days (including one log that says “PLEASE STAY ON THE TRAIL”).
- Added 105 feet to the fencing near the parking area to limit hiker access to the center of the bald and continue the recovery of the habitat.
- Added 21 feet of fencing to the fence on top blocking access to the social trail.
- Added 21 feet and rebuilt the fence at the staircase that had been dismantled and burned.
- Added drainage to the left side blue blaze to stop the erosion of the trail near the bottom. Gravel was added to help with hiker footing.
- Eliminated 7 fire rings, removed trash, and planted seed from nearby grass on the burned areas.
- Installed 12 permanent signs on posts with the maps and new rules.
- Installed another 10 signs showing way to parking and limits of closure area.
- Painted the gate!
- Added 4 volunteers interested in the TA program and others in trail maintenance.

CMC crews also cut and split all the wood necessary for the fencing and transported it to the site, saving over \$1000 in costs. Bearwaters Brewing in Maggie Valley generously hosted the participants after the work day.



Local news covered the day with some nice articles and a news video.

['We want to protect this beautiful place' Max Patch celebrates National Public Lands Day | WLOS](#)



'We want to protect this beautiful place' Max Patch celebrates National Public Lands Day | WLOS

Some local organizations and the United States Forest Service celebrated National Public Lands Day with a work day at Max Patch Saturday, Sept. 25. Volunteers gathered at Max Patch Saturday ...

<https://smokymountainnews.com/outdoors/item/32281-transformation-on-trail-volunteers-converge-to-secure-max-patch-s-future>.

['Nature's winning' at Max Patch 3 months after camping ban \(citizen-times.com\)](#)

Additional work is being done to restore the habitat, led by Matt Drury from ATC and assisted in part by CMC volunteers. Non-native plants are being removed and replaced by native grasses and wildflowers. In November alone Matt and crew planted over 3000 plants, and also continue work to build habitat for warblers. Contact Barbara Morgan if you want to help with this or any other natural resources work.





The Visitor Use Management Committee comprised of the Forest Service, ATC, and CMC continues to oversee and direct this and all other work at Max Patch as part of the cooperative management system for the A.T.

## CMC's Natural Resources Team Helps at Max Patch

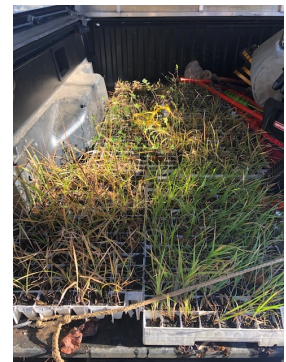
by Barbara Morgan

During November, our team took on a new task – planting new, beneficial, and beautiful plants - rather than working on invasive species removal as we have done in the past. Coordinated by Matt Drury of the ATC, the project involves establishing a large number of pollinator plants on the high ridgeline of Max Patch where the A.T. runs. Once they get large enough to bloom, they'll attract bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, and other beneficial creatures to transfer pollen from flower to flower.



Many thanks to those who have joined me so far (and there will be more opportunities coming soon) – George Shepherd, Neill Hirst, Fay Yee, and Linda Lucha. It was wonderful to be on the much-recovered site and be doing something that will last forever.

It is a team project by multiple agencies (Mountain True, the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and others) lending their expertise to procure seeds from native plants that would work well in the Max Patch environment, grow them in trays, and then plant the “plugs” on the mountain in selected areas. Our role as CMC members of the group was/is to help the other agency folks in getting the plugs planted. It's a big job – the goal is over 3,000 plants in the ground before it gets too late in the season to do so. After two workdays so far, we're close to halfway there! The plant list includes large coreopsis, yellow wild indigo, Maryland golden aster, Virginia wild rye, Indian grass, little bluestem, purple top, and deer tongue grass. So, it should create a riot of color when everything blooms!



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## South Beyond 6000 Peaks

by Les Love

For those of us who are hiking the South Beyond 6000 peaks, in case you don't already know about these neat maps, you can order them from Red Hot Mapping at

<https://redhotmapping.com/products/south-beyond-6000-challenge-sb6k-scratch-off-map> (we're going to frame ours to hang on the wall!) Redhot Mapping also has maps for the Smokies and is doing one for the MST. Very reasonably priced and high quality. The peaks are shown in a list on the back.



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## Hiking for Newcomers

by Kathy Kyle

In October, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee held two Zoom presentations titled *Hiking for Newcomers* to introduce new hikers to hiking. Afterward, members of the committee offered two short easy hikes (less than 3 miles) for those attending the presentation. As a result, three of the attendees joined the Carolina Mountain Club.



The committee will continue to hold introductory presentations and introductory hikes quarterly. The next presentation is Monday, Jan. 10, at 6 p.m. via Zoom. Zoom sessions will also be held in April 2022, July 2022 and October 2022. (Specific dates for these months will be set and posted at a later date.) If you know of groups or individuals who would be interested in this presentation, please contact the committee at [cmcnwhikers@gmail.com](mailto:cmcnwhikers@gmail.com)

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## Parkway Closures

by Kathy Kyle

Fall and winter means sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway may be closed. Check the Blue Ridge Parkway website for closures before leading a hike that requires parkway access. The weather fluctuates during fall and spring and the parkway can be closed even though the weather looks fine at lower elevations. Here is the website link:

<https://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/roadclosures.htm>





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## SHARE YOUR PHOTOS AND STORIES

by Jan Onan

We are providing CMC hike leaders and crew members with an easy way to show off your great outings through photos and stories on our CMC Instagram. John Bellizia has graciously volunteered to post your photos to CMC's Instagram page which is set up to automatically post on CMC's FaceBook page.



Whether you are leading a hike or working on a trail, you can now send your photos with a line or two explaining the scene to John. To those of you who already post on our CMC FaceBook page, keep posting! If you want, you can still send to John so he can make an Instagram story which does not repost to our FB page.

Send to [jhonbellizia@gmail.com](mailto:jhonbellizia@gmail.com)

We look forward to seeing all your faces, scenery, adventures and trail work on our CMC Instagram page!

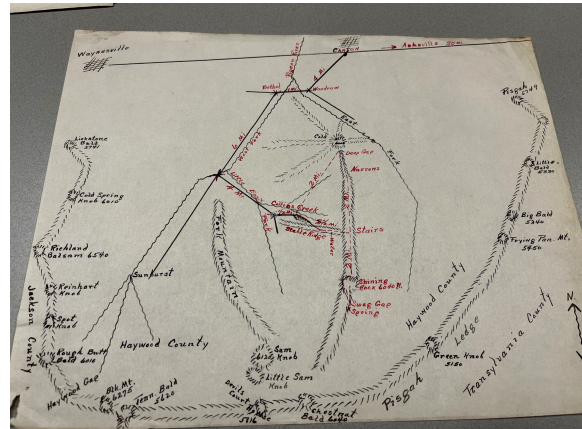
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### Hike report to Shining Rock Made by Carolina Appalachian Trail Club on Sept. 20, 1931 and led by Walter M. Watts

*The Life Summary of Walter Moore Watts (1893 – 1959)*

*When Walter Moore Watts was born on 2 February 1893, in Tyrone, Blair, Pennsylvania, United States, his father, Thomas Edward Watts, was 28 and his mother, Mary Moore, was 26. He married Helen Margaret Neely on 15 November 1917, in*

*Buncombe, North Carolina, United States. They were the parents of at least 1 son. He lived in Asheville, Buncombe, North Carolina, United States for about 15 years and District 945, Dougherty, Georgia, United States in 1940. He registered for military service in 1917. He died on 3 August 1959, in La Grange, Troup, Georgia, United States, at the age of 66, and was buried in La Grange, Troup, Georgia, United States.*



Shining Rock, 6040 ft. elevation, the southern peak of a 6000 ft. range, nine miles long, leading north from Chestnut Bald on the Pisgah Ridge, and terminating in Cold Mountain, forms the divide between the East and West fork of Pigeon River.

Shining Rock is aptly named from the remarkable mass of white quartz interspersed with pink and black, more than an eighth of a mile long and from thirty to sixty feet thick, that lies along the crest of the mountain, and which is a conspicuous landmark for miles around.

A series of ledges called the "Stairs" terminate like a funnel to form a mile and a half long knife-like ridge between Shining Rock and Cold Mountain. These give this range a diversity of formations extremely interesting and unusual.

September, 1931, happened to be one of the warmest Western North Carolina had experienced in many years. Just a little too warm for brisk climbing, and yet dry and clear. Ideal weather for views, and the trails firm under foot. A change in weather threatened on Saturday September 19 with the wind from the south and east, and the clouds gathering heavily over the mountains and valleys. Sunday dawned with some prospects of a fair day, the wind having changed overnight, and a party of 28 left the Federal Building at Asheville, N.C. at 7:15 A.M. Eighteen of the party rode in a truck generously furnished by the U.S. Forestry Service. The private cars followed as we drove west 20 miles to Canton on Highway No. 10. A slight drizzle of rain began to fall, but scattered patches of blue were showing through the clouds which were riding high above us.

Turning south at Canton on Highway # (??) we drove four miles to Woodrow at junction of East and West forks of Pigeon River. Turning right at Woodrow we crossed two bridges and continued one mile to the small village of Bethel. The roads are hard surfaced to this point.

Changing direction again we turned to the left at school house, and continued south in direction of Sunburst for a distance of six miles over a gravel road to the point where the "Little East Fork" of the "West Fork" joined the West Fork of Pigeon River. The sun was shining but this time, and as the blue of the sky widened its scope, our spirits expanded in proportion.

Turning left again we found ourselves on a very rough and winding sand clay road which we followed a distance of four miles. When Collins Creek empties from the left into the Little East Fork we turned left at Y in the road and pointed the nose of our cars straight up the mountains for a half mile, over rocks, boulders and decrepit looking bridges. Arriving at a point where a wooden gate swings over the road we parked our cars just below a mountaineer's cabin. Tim 9:00 A.M. Distance from Asheville 35 ½ miles.

Shouldering packs at 9:15 we veered to the right and followed old trail towards Stable Ridge. About fifteen minutes walk placed the right hand logging flume on our left. Several log trails were branching off on left of trail, but we continued a short distance until a well defined foot trail guided us from the main trail to the left directly toward the mountain. About a quarter of a mile and we came to a Buckeye stump on which was a blaze, and we took trail leading to right and began the real climb up Stable Ridge.

Nearly straight up we went for about a mile through hardwood timber. We then came out on a gradual slope that was once a fine stand of spruce and hemlock, but which is now a hideous slash. Here we found water and rested while we arranged to leave three of the party who were not in condition to go on to the top. [Pisgah burned in 1925]

A net work of logging trails branched from this point and we were about a half mile from the top of the divide. So we went straight ahead, and when the trail became impassible, at large blazed stump, we struck off through the woods to the right for fifty yards or so, and found a faint trail which led us to the top.

Stable Ridge trail brought us to a point about half way between Cold Mountain and Shining Rock which is shown on the map as the "Stairs". In two and a half miles we had climbed about 3000ft. Turning to the right, south, we followed a fine trail along top of the divide through woods and grassy meadows, and over rocks. Views opening out to East and West. Another mile brought us to the old logging railroad bed, now a broad open trail. Here is an old iron covered shack that would do well in case of storm. Turning to the right we followed old roadbed under the crest of Shining Rock to a high open gap called "Swag Gap."

Looking over the left shoulder we saw about us the white quartz ledges that give Shining Rock its name. We found a good spring just beyond Swag Gap, south of Shining Rock, and on the East slope of the divide, and just below old log road bed. It was now 12:45. Eating lunch at the spring we retraced our steps to Swag Gap and continued on to top, a distance of a quarter mile.

From Shining Rock, 6040 feet elevation, a wonderful panorama of mountain and valley spreads out to the far reaches. Craggies, Mitchell, Blue Ridge, Pisgah Ledge, Richland Balsams, Plott Balsams, Smokies, Sam Knob, etc. The white, pink and black rock ledges of Shining Rock with their background of balsam and spruce make a picture well worth the effort to reach them.

On the return trip, at point on trail where Stable Ridge takes to the left, and which is marked by a large tree fallen across trail, twelve of the party continued north across the "Narrows" to Deep Gap. This party was led by Dr. O.C. Barker. From here they turned left and followed a good trail down the west slop to the parked cars.

The balance of the party retraced their steps down Stable Ridge and rejoined the three members that had been left on the climb that morning. Leaving the foot of the mountain at 6:P.M. we arrived in Asheville about 8 o'clock.

Driving time Asheville to Collins Creek, 35 ½ miles: one a three quarter hours. 7:15 A.M. to 9 A.M.

Time consumed on climb up Stable Ridge to Stairs, 2 ½ miles – 2 ½ hours. 9:15 A.M. to 11:45 A.M.

Time consumed on two mile trail along the divide to Swag Gap: 1 hour. This part of trail is comparatively a level grade.

Total walking time to top, 3 ½ hours. The descent was made in 2 ¼ hours 3 P.M. to 5:15 P.M.

Round trip hike: 9 miles, walking time: 5 hours, 15 minutes.

The party making circle across Narrows added 2 miles to their hike making a total of 11 miles in walking time of 5 hours, 15 minutes.



Thirteen visitors enjoyed the hike, while 15 regular members rounded out the quota of 28: George Masa, Jess Buell, Jewel King, Janet Nihlean, Dr. O.C. Barker, John Wilmot, L.D. Rogers, Julia Nevercel, Mrs. Peobles, Sue Latimer, Chester Phelps, Walter Watts, Jr., John Davis and Walter Watts.

Canteens are not essential on this trip to those trained to hike long distances with a light pack. Those who have tried it find that a lemon will not only keep down thirst but will also freshen you on a long, steep climb.

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Carolina Mountain Club - P.O. Box 68  
Asheville, NC 28802  
[www.carolinamountainclub.org](http://www.carolinamountainclub.org)