

Highland Sojourner

Volume X, Issue I Newsletter of the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc. Jan-March 2008

www.pinemountaintrail.com

Bulletin Board

Volunteer Vacations	Group	Host
March 9-15	University of Kentucky	PMTC
March 16-22	University of Wisconsin-Madison	PMTC
June 8-14	PMTC Alumni	PMTC
Sept. 21-27	Sierra Club	PMTC

*If you are interested, contact the PMTC via the website or by e-mail at sbaker@uky.edu or phone at (606) 633-2362

Weekend Getaways

March 15, April 26, May 24, June 21, July 26, August 23, Sept. 27, Oct. 18, Nov. 29th, 2008

(Weekend Getaways are designed for those who work a full time job. In warmer weather, volunteers can come in on Friday evening; camp at a site we have prepared, work on Saturday, and return home on Sunday. For more information, contact the PMTC, P.O. Box 784, Whitesburg, KY 41858 or sbaker@uky.edu .) **RSVP**

Required!!

Pine Mountain Trail Conference Meeting

February 21, 2008 at 1 PM at Elkhorn City Library. For more info, call (606) 633-2362. Meet at **10 AM** at the Library for the hike.



Gazebo at Kingdom Come State Park

Words from the Woods

by Shad Baker

Mastless forest floors have led to quiet woods, the only sound a whisper and dab as the white flakes touch softly on the earth.

This season has seen a flurry of activity on the Pine Mountain Trail project. Today alone, I have received 15+ calls dealing with everything from landowners, to inter-agency negotiations and photos. The trailhead at US 23 awaits the final environmental assessment before construction can begin. Volunteers are coming in February to build the Jack Sautter Campsite a couple of miles from the US 23 trailhead. Plans for the shelter at Kingdom Come State Park have been submitted to the Kentucky Department of Parks and are awaiting approval. Land adjacent to Kingdom Come State Park (400 + acres) should be secured this week.

All in all, it has been a very eventful season and the future looks increasingly bright for the Pine Mountain Trail. Happy Trails!

Great Eastern Trail Association Formally Created

A group of delegates from multiple trail organizations up and down the Eastern U.S. met recently in Marion, Virginia to formally create the Great Eastern Trail Association (www.greateasterntail.org). The idea for the trail system hatched several years back at a Southeast Foot-trails Coalition Conference. Recognizing that many of the partnering trails either connected or could easily be joined, it became an early mission of the Coalition to work towards that end.

With a tremendous amount of support from the National Parks Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the American Hiking Society, the group found a strong teammate for the project in the Mid-Atlantic Trails Coalition.

At the inaugural meeting, held at Hungry Mother State Park, the group talked over some of the most pressing issues and appointed several committees. The Nominating Committee was appointed and later met by conference call to select nominees for an Executive slate of officers. Tom Johnson of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club was selected as the nominee for President; Dennis Crowley of the Kentucky Trails Association was selected as the nominee for Secretary.

When completed, the trail system will stretch from the Florida panhandle to the Finger Lakes region of New York State and will span over 1600 miles. With this the Pine Mountain Trail becomes part of a much larger trails system and proudly enters the stage of states offering superb long-trails for hikers.

Shelter to be Built Honoring Dr. Larry Turner at Kingdom Come State Park

As some of you may recall, Dr. Larry Turner, the Associate Director for the Cooperative Extension Service in Kentucky, was tragically killed when Comair Flight 5191 crashed in a pasture in Lexington KY. Dr. Turner was a supporter of the Pine Mountain Trail project and saw Extension's role, even when others thought it was out of our arena. In this instance and many others, he was a true visionary.

He lent support with encouraging words and stepped in with financial resources when it appeared travel funds for meetings and to shuttle volunteers might disappear on the local level. For this, the Pine Mountain Trail Conference will forever be grateful.

In recognition of Dr. Turner's contributions towards Kentucky's premier long-trail, the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Parks and with the support of a Recreational Trails Program grant will soon launch construction of a shelter in his honor. The shelter will be located at Kingdom Come State Park near Cumberland KY, just behind the Park Manager's Office (near Bullock overlook). This

location places it almost exactly in the middle of the Pine Mountain Trail. Given the location, it is likely it will prove useful to hikers that have been in the woods for several days and need a chance to clean-up and go into town.

The plans submitted to the Kentucky Department of Parks this week, are borrowed from the Partnership Shelter, located in the Mount Rogers Recreational Area on the Appalachian Trail. The plans call for a shower, sink and a sleeping capacity of around 20, along with a covered picnic table.

When completed, the shelter will be the 'Cadillac' of the PMT shelter system and will offer hikers, backpackers, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and others a respite from their journeys on Pine Mountain.

Winter Hiking

by Paul Hopkins

Anytime is a good time to hike as you can always find something new and different. During this time of year you can see farther without the obstruction by the many shades of green. You can see the contours of the land and find old paths and trails. Unfortunately, you can also see the many stresses put on our mountains by man.

After a long winter, I look for the first signs of spring as nature always manages to start anew. When the Colts Foot blooms and the trees begin to bud, I then make my New Years resolution.

Last Sunday, around 2:00 in the afternoon, my dog Gypsy finally convinced me it was time to go for a walk. As soon as I got my walking stick and backpack Gypsy was ready to go. Because it was later in the day, she did not find the turkey or grouse she was accustomed to scaring up in the mornings, but did manage to chase a ground squirrel or two.

During my hike I noticed that some Redbuds and Dogwoods on the south side of the mountain were forming buds. I also noticed that a Witch-Hazel tree had some flowers still attached to its branches. Many people don't know that the Witch-Hazel is an oddity in nature. The tree flowers in late October thru early December. The grays and multi color browns of the mountains are dispersed with small trees and bushes covered with thin yellow petal blossoms. The flowers are pollinated by the winter moth. The fruit becomes dormant during the winter months, but develops over the growing season to mature in the fall, ten to twelve months after pollination.

So next fall when the leaves are all gone and you are looking at our beautiful mountains try to find these bushes with small yellow flowers the full length of their branches, then turn to someone and say, " Look at the Witch-Hazel tree".

You both will be better for it.

LOST!

by Shad Baker

The Pine Mountain Trail Conference, in conjunction with the Letcher County Cooperative Extension Service, recently hosted an over-night backpacking trip on the Highlands Section of the Pine Mountain Trail. The plan was to hike from US 119 to the Adena Springs Shelter for the night, and then hike out to US 23 the next day.

There were six people total that actually showed up (many talk a big game, but fail to bring it). When we left our vehicles, it was windy, drizzly, and cold; not exactly stellar hiking weather. Before we had gotten out of sight of the trucks, 'Lost John' began to complain of trouble breathing. He figured it was the altitude. I gave a nervous smile (altitude doesn't affect most people until you reach ~6,000 ft....we were at a paltry 2,300 ft.). I worried that maybe 'Lost John' wasn't quite ready for our trip. We planned to cover 9+ miles before the shelter and while it wasn't extremely difficult, there was, in the words of a friend 'a modicum of undulations'.

We hiked together until we reached the Flamingo Shelter (a scant ¾ miles from US 119). From there we dropped into a ravine and started our first small ascent. 'Lost John' was no where in sight. We stopped to let him catch up. When he did, he said, and I quote "I'm fine. You guys go on." So we did.

At the sign-in box, we signed and waited again. Several minutes went by and then our friend again appeared and with some effort said "You guys don't need to keep waiting on me. I'll be fine." Now for those who do not know, it is a matter of Southern etiquette to obey a request that is offered at least three times. Since 'Lost John' spoke so emphatically, we decided to fore-go the customary third strike rule and simply hike on.

Over hill and dale, we marched before reaching Baker Rock/Camp Rock inside the Bad Branch State Nature Preserve. As the rain was still falling and we were fairly well soaked, we were pleased to break for lunch and wait for our tardy brother. After a few jokes, a good lunch, and a break in the clouds, there was still no 'Lost John'. We considered that perhaps he too had stopped for a meal, so we began our hike on to High Rock.

When we reached the precipice and soaked in the view of fog-filled Whitesburg and the sweeping views of the Cumberland, we decided to place a call. John had called earlier, but had caller ID block, so he couldn't be contacted. Our fifth and sixth companions were supposed to leave the parking lot at 12:30, so we gave them a call. They were on the trail, but hadn't encountered John. After a long delay, we trudged on.

From High Rock the trail passes over several cliff-lines before falling down into a gap and ascending back up, under a cliff, and then regains the ridge-line. In another mile, the trail pops out on a large un-named rock. This view is my favorite in Kentucky. It offers 70+ mile views on crystal days, and makes you feel truly alive. From here we tried waiting a little while further, but still no word from 'Lost John'.

At this point we decided to quit worrying. Our two hikers could play 'sweeper' and nudge the straggler along. Without the worry on my shoulders, I enjoyed the remainder of the day; crossing over several momentarily un-named rock outcrops and seeing a remote part of the mountain. At the last view before the shelter, we called our 'sweepers'. They had *passed* 'Lost John' at the over-head cliff. He was described as 'bewildered'. We were assured that if he made even 1 mile an hour (slightly faster than molasses in January), he should reach camp before dark. No worries!

At camp we filtered water for the group, Pastor Ron started an excellent fire (no small feat for an Air Force man), and we settled in to clean, dry clothes to await our camp mates. Somewhere around 4:30 PM, our 'sweepers' arrived at camp. They relayed humorous antic dotes, talked about work, dried clothes and joined our wait.

At 6 PM, I was reminded that the description of this particular hike was that it was 'guided'. That meant that as guide, I was responsible for the fate of 'Lost John'. I winced. I didn't especially savor the thought of lurching back along a darkened ridge (in perfectly dry clothes, mind you), to find a hapless hiker.

At 6:30 (i.e. dark), with much trepidation, I gathered my LED hand-lamp (and my courage) and headed into the unknown. Before departing, I nervously mentioned that if anyone wanted to join me, they were welcome. None of my comrades accepted my invitation to tag along. Cowards!

So off into the dark in went. "John!" "Jooohhhnn!" No answer. Down into a rhododendron thicket, around a cliff, and up a hill. "John!" "Jooohhhnn!" Still no answer. I started to wonder if rumors of mountain lions being back in the mountains were true. A shiver went up my back.

Black bears don't worry me. I've seen nine on Pine Mountain and they have all ran...either because they saw or smelled me. Cats, on the other hand, are a different matter. I'd just watched an episode of National Geographic where mountain lions had attacked grown men; even men over 6 feet tall! This was a rather rude bursting of my bubble, as I'd often heard that mountain lions only attacked women and innocent children. I'd taken comfort in being over 6 foot and 'healthy'. Now here I was, in the dark, no gun, no knife, and a pitiful little LED light. Just as I started to write out what I wanted engraved on my head-stone, I decided that hollering might actually scare a mountain lion away. "Jooooooooohhhhhhhhhnnnnnn!" No answer.

Before leaving camp, I had mentally decided that I wouldn't go any further than Mayking Knob. It is the highest point on Pine Mountain and has several radio towers and small structures. If 'Lost John' hadn't made it that far, he had probably turned back or died. In either case, I couldn't be of much assistance. As I came within view, and there was still no sign of him, I decided that perhaps I should involve professionals. I happened to know, from previous experience, that there was cellular coverage at a rock to the northeast of Mayking Knob, so out came my phone. 9—1—1.

"911. What is your emergency?"

"My name is Shad Baker and I am on Pine Mountain and we have a hiker lost."

"What was your name? Are you lost?"

"No! My name is Shad Baker and I know where I am. There is a hiker in our group that was having breathing trouble. He fell behind and now I can't locate him."

"I'm going to put you on the line with someone more familiar with the area." ... "Hello. My name is ____ Where are you exactly?"

"I am on the Pine Mountain Trail between Mayking Knob and Rumley Branch."

"Sir, I'm not familiar with those locations. What is the nearest road?"

"US 119, but I'm 9 miles from there. The closest vehicle access to where I am is Rumley Branch Road in Virginia."

"Is that in Kentucky?"

"No. It's in Virginia." (*So help me I'm not making this up!)

"Sir, are you in Kentucky or Virginia?"

"I am in Kentucky, but the nearest road access is in Virginia."

"Oh my! Let me let you talk to a state trooper."

"My name is Trooper_____. Sir, where are you?"

"I'm on Pine Mountain, out in the middle of nowhere. There is ATV access via Pine Branch. It goes up to a place called Box Rock..."

"Sir! You are going to have to walk out to the nearest road."

"Sir, that is 9 miles away. It is nowhere near the lost man and it would take me four hours to get there. I'm not going to go to a road."

"We can't help you where you are."

"Well I tell you what. I'm going to look for him a little more, and if I can't find him, I'll call you back."

Yeah, right! That call wasn't going to be made unless he was already dead! I climbed on up Mayking Knob and hollered, "Jooohhhnnn!" In the distance I heard a faint holler back. Was that the guys at camp? Was it some punk messing with me from the houses below?

"Joohhnn!"

"Yeeeaahhh!" came a slightly stronger response.

"Where are you?" No answer came.

Great! Now what? I knew that I was going to have to go down the *very* steep southwest slope of Mayking Knob. So down I went. As I neared the bottom (which is actually at Box Rock), I hollered again and got an immediate reply. 'Lost John' had climbed down a piece of antennae that was used as a ladder, and had taken refuge under a large cliff. After some discussion, I encouraged him to make ready and come on to the shelter. After ~20 minutes, he had gathered his belongings and was attempting to climb the 'ladder'. He received no points for form, but he did manage to scale the antennae and hand me his pack. From there he related that he had stopped hiking at 4:30 PM because he thought it looked like a good spot.

Good Spot!? Where's my Prozac? It was the most depressing place I'd ever seen; dreary, lonesome, damp. Oh well, at least he was alive and headed to camp.

Over rock and vine we tramped. He coughed off and on and had to stop frequently, but we finally made it to the shelter.

At the shelter, soaked again from the hiking and stress, I was finally able to relax for the day. I thought about the situation; the dark, the loneliness, the mountain lions, and the helpless helpers. I was glad that I went, but what if I'd gotten lost too? And it was there that I realized...you can never be lost if you know the way to where you are going.

This is true in life, at home, at work. A true sense of direction and purpose; it only comes from one place. See Jeremiah 29:11 if you've never found it.

In the Footsteps of Lucy Braun by Merrill Flanary

Twice a year at the Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County, people from throughout the United States meet for a four-day, four-night workshop highlighting the best natural areas in the region. The workshop is called "In the Footsteps of Lucy Braun." The Settlement School's idyllic setting and the exploration that occurs during the workshop are reasons "In the Footsteps of Lucy Braun" has been a successful event for many years.

E. Lucy Braun was an early- and mid-twentieth century leader and pioneer in the field of plant ecology. A native to Cincinnati, Ohio, Braun earned a thorough training in geology and botany from the University of Cincinnati. Her work focused on vascular plant floristics of deciduous forests. A majority of her field research was conducted on Pine Mountain and Black Mountain in southeastern Kentucky. Her most influential work, from 1950, was entitled *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*, and documented in characteristic detail both the current conditions of the forest in this region and the history of its development after the end of the Ice Age.

Beginning in her mid-20s, she started making trips to Pine Mountain and Black Mountain to observe vegetation. No road was too poor for her to tackle, as she often drove her old Model T up mountains to satisfy her perfectionist demand for thoroughness.

Her bravery and passion were unmatched by any other ecologist in the eastern United States. Her unequaled familiarity with the region culminated in her widely hailed 1950 book, which serves as a permanent historical record of the area's native forests, many of which have since been disturbed by natural resource extraction. *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America* was published after 25 years and 65,000 miles of research, and is still regarded internationally as the definitive text on the subject.

"In the Footsteps of Lucy Braun" workshop at Pine Mountain Settlement School celebrates the work of Lucy Braun by visiting several areas where she conducted research. Many of these natural areas are still intact thanks to dedicated land conservation work in Kentucky. If you attend the workshop, expect to be bombarded with information about flora and fauna of the region provided by the most experienced naturalists currently working in Kentucky.

The areas visited over the four-day workshop include Bad Branch State Nature Preserve, Lilley Cornett Woods, Blanton Forest State Nature Preserve, and other various places on Black and Pine Mountain.

Bad Branch State Nature Preserve is 2,500 acres of protected forest on Pine Mountain in Letcher County. Bad Branch—a designated Kentucky Wild River—is among the cleanest streams in the state and has carved out a deep hemlock gorge with numerous overhangs and rock shelters; its sandstone cliffs rise well above the surrounding forest. Bad Branch Falls is an impressive sixty-foot waterfall that cascades over sandstone cliffs and is a favorite attraction in the area. Also located at Bad Branch State Nature Preserve is the highest point on Pine Mountain. At a towering 3,000 feet above sea level, High Rocks offers a unique view of the Cumberland Plateau. Bad Branch has one of the highest concentrations of rare and endangered plant species in the state.

Lilley Cornett Woods is over 500 acres of old-growth forest located in the Cumberland Plateau of Letcher County. Lilley Cornett is a Registered National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of Interior, and it is also a Registered Natural Area of the Society of American Foresters. The cove forests of Lilley Cornett Woods are an

ecological gem in the Cumberland Plateau with towering black walnut, sugar maple, and American beech trees. A visit to Lilley Cornett Woods is a memorable, one-of-a-kind experience.

Blanton Forest State Nature Preserve is the largest protected old-growth forest in Kentucky. Many of the trees are three to four feet in diameter. Several trees have been dated to the late 1600's. Blanton Forest contains several forest communities, including mountaintop wetlands known as acid seeps and mixed-mesophytic deciduous forest. Many tree species such as sugar maple, tulip poplar, various oaks, hemlocks, beech and several magnolias make up the forest canopy in this 3,000 acre Preserve.

Other stops during the "In the Footsteps of Lucy Braun" workshop include the highest point in Kentucky on top of Black Mountain. This adjunct forest type is the only one of its kind in Kentucky. At over 4,145 feet above sea level, Black Mountain has the largest concentration of rare and endangered plants in the state. Also, the workshop features new Preserves on Pine Mountain with both ecological and historical features.

"In the Footsteps of Lucy Braun" is a rare opportunity to learn about the ecologically significant areas that are preserved in the region. The workshop also offers a wide variety of lectures on botany, geology, ornithology, and current land conservation efforts in the region. The workshop includes lodging, meals, all programs, and transportation to natural areas. This workshop is geared to adults and participants should be able to hike four to eight miles daily on moderate to strenuous trails. The workshop is offered June 11-15 and August 13-17, 2008. Visit www.pinemountainsettlementschool.com for more information. Do not miss out on this educational opportunity. It will be well worth your time.



Membership

*All memberships are based on a calendar year (January-December) *Membership entitles you to a one-year subscription to the *Highland Sojourner*, the newsletter of the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc. and a decal.

- Student Class** \$20 For those under 24 and in school
- Individual Class** \$25
- Family Class** \$40
- Individual Lifetime** \$1,000 (or \$335 for three years), lifetime members receive a membership card, decal, cap and jacket
- Contribution** \$_____

Please **check** the membership class you are requesting.

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