

Highland Sojourner

Volume XII, Issue II

Newsletter of the Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc.

Summer 2010

www.pinemountaintrail.com

Bulletin Board

Volunteer Vacations

Host

Check the PMTC Website or join the Yahoo Group

Volunteer Outing – Monday, July 12. Trail Relocation

PMTC – Contact Shad at 633-2362 for info

Weekend Getaways

Check the PMTC Website or join the Yahoo Group

*(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 Meetings

<i>July 15, 2010</i>	<i>Harlan County Extension Service office</i>	<i>1pm</i>
<i>August 19, 2010</i>	<i>Cumberland Gap National Historical Park</i>	<i>1pm</i>
<i>September 16, 2010</i>	<i>Breaks Interstate Park</i>	<i>1pm</i>

Upcoming PMTC Events

*August 12, 2010 Perseids Meteor Shower Night Hike – 7pm
for more info contact Shad Baker – 606-633-2362*

Words from the Woods by Shad Baker

The sound of wind and warbler blend among the boughs and christen the peaks of a peaceful ridge, awash with green and dripping in morning dew.

This has been a fairly eventful spring and early summer for the Pine Mountain Trail. We are working towards the construction of the shelter house at Kingdom Come State Park.

We have recently completed the Jack Sautter Campsite near US 23. It has four tent sites, a fire ring and a bear pole. We have also installed bear poles at the three shelter sites and will be installing others as we are able (we have them on-hand and are awaiting volunteers to help carry them in and set them).

On the topic of shelters, we are discussing and working towards the placement of two shelter sites on the Birch Knob Section (one at the Elkhorn city Overlook on property owned by the Breaks Interstate Park and one just northeast of the Birch Knob Tower at the Mullins homesite). We recently re-located the PMT onto a more scenic portion of the mountain at the Breaks Interstate Gorge. The new portion is blazed with the new green blazes and we are gradually converting the trail over to the green blaze.

The PMTC has also been at work updating the web-page, having new brochures printed by the Dept. of Parks, having new kiosk panels printed for our trailheads, offering guided hikes each month (see the website link to 'Yahoo groups'), and moving towards securing more easements and property for the future trail route.

If this sounds like progress, it is. And we need your help. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS! Our work days are on the Yahoo group. Check it out and call to join in on the action. Without you, there can be no Pine Mountain Trail.

Flying Limbs, Flying Gloves, Wet Feet & a Chestnut Snag by Jeremy Williams

As I sit here writing this article, it is a nice un-seasonably cool, July day here in the shadows of Pine Mountain. It makes me think back to an unusually warm day back in late-January. On that day, I met up with Shad Baker, James Stapleton, Kyle Napier and Clint Lester at the Bad Branch Trail Head. The goal of that day was to clear blown down trees along a small section of the Pine Mountain Trail. The winter, especially the snow, had been hard on the trail and tree limbs littered several portions it. Taking advantage of this warm January weather and hoping the rain would hold off, the group split up and trudged into the south side of this great mountain.

Getting to the PMT, from an access trail, was an adventure in itself. As Shad, James, and I trekked the narrow path leading to the PMT, we ran into several obstacles along the way, and I guess you could say we had a feeling they would be there; downed tree limbs, broken rhododendron and mountain laurel, ice falling from rock ledges above, but it was great to be out and about. For James and I, this was our first trip up this access trail that reaches the top of the mountain and intersects the PMT. Shad on the other hand, I'm convinced, had been through here in the dark! He often mentioned that "we'll have to go over here and wade this stream" or "we'll have to jump this stream right up here and its deep too, so be careful." Not too far along this journey James and I had wet socks and Shad laughed in contentment, I'm sure he probably missed that jump in the past or waded across the stream in the wrong place. Needless to say, wet socks and January don't mix and I don't care what the temperature is. As we continued on our venture to reach High Rock, removing limbs from the trail, all of the sudden Shad stopped and said "do you see anything?" We looked around and lo and behold there was a "blast from the past." Standing guard over the trail was an old American chestnut snag. It was more than six feet through, ten feet high and was very stately. You could tell that he once served as a patriarch of this forest. It was truly a joy to see this great treasure and also sad to know what its fate was some 70 years ago. After a few photos, we continued on, because we had work to do and a goal at hand.

Once reaching the area around High Rock, it was obvious that the snows of December had taken their toll on the trail. Tree limbs littered the trail in each direction. We continued to High Rock where we removed several of those limbs and Shad said "just toss them over the side of the rock." During all of this, tossing and cleaning up of the trail I heard Shad say "OH NO!" I looked around to see him with only one glove on. I said "what happened?" and he proceeded to tell us that his missing glove had become attached to a limb and vanished somewhere below High Rock. At this time, James and I gave him some real grief and it felt good. Now we had gotten revenge for all the laughter that had taken place earlier in the day. Shortly thereafter, we were joined by Kyle and Clint and we all made our way back off the mountain feeling proud (and tired) from the job that we had done. At our vehicles we bid farewell to each other, James and I with our wet feet and Shad waiving goodbye with his cold right hand!



**Remains of an American chestnut near Adena Spring Shelter
Photo by Jeremy Williams**

Hiking on the Birch Knob Section (US 23 to Breaks Interstate Park) by Gayle Horne

Orvill and I finally got the opportunity to hike the Birch Knob section in early June after a delay on our start time we met at the Police Station in Elkhorn City on Sunday afternoon to leave one car and drove to Pound Gap, parked the second car at the Church with the Pastors permission by this time it was 2:30 PM. The trail was in very good shape and well marked Orvil had hiked from Elkhorn City several years before hand but extreme cold weather had forced him to leave the trail at Birch Knob. We hiked until 6:30 PM made camp in a low gap with a good breeze coming through plus a wonderful view of the mountains to the southwest. After a good night rest we were set out for Birch Knob, so far replenishing our water has not been a problem we were particularly interested in an old home place in one of the low gaps it is difficult to understand the hardships they must have endured living in such a remote area. We came upon a second home place that had been on a wagon road from Dickerson County, VA to Ashcamp, KY that was still in operation until the early 1930`s the road was still well defined we would like to hike that to experience a little what the people did back then. We have experience some sections of the trail that has been used by ATVs I was amazed at the damage they have done to the trail. The trail is still marked well but must pay attention to the blazes some have faded or trees have fallen. About 4:30 PM we came down off the mountain onto the gravel road at Mullins Pond we had planed on replenishing our water supply there but the water quality there was poor so we continued on we have been using about 2 to 3 liters of water each day. The hike up the gravel road was a heart pounder we had gained about 600 ft in elevation and then the road went down into a low gap so we had to climb it again after a lot of stops we finally reached Birch Knob. I cannot say enough for what the National Forest Service has done at Birch Knob a wonderful place to spend the night we were blessed with a Full Moon that night, to say the view from the deck at Birch Knob was so breathtaking it is beyond description. In late June, I made a special trip back there just to experience it again. The trail from Birch Knob north is open to horse riders with the wet weather the trail was really muddy and difficult to walk on. The trail condition from horse riding is nothing when compared to the ATVs do to the trail. I could write pages on all the beauty we have seen on this hike, deer paid little attention to us as passed by. Tuesday as we got closer to Skegg's Wall the ATV usage has increased to a point that the trail has been destroyed. We camped Tuesday evening at the base of Skegg's Wall near Gold Fish Pond a nice campsite listing to Whippoorwills soon put us to sleep. With a short but steep climb out of Skegg's Wall area it is mostly down hill to Elkhorn City. The area in & around Potters Flat is all but destroyed by the over usage of ATVs. I have not seen so much graffiti, trash and mud holes that were made impassable even by ATVs near the Breaks Interstate Park area. I would not recommend that section of the Pine Mountain Trail to anyone. We were off the mountain and at the Elkhorn City Police Station by 3 PM.



**Hikers on the Pine Mountain Trail near one of the new bear poles
Photo by: Gayle Horne**

Pine Mountain Trail Conference Yahoo Group & Facebook Page

Remember to check out the PMTC Yahoo Group as well as the PMTC Facebook page. These webpages continue to get plenty of hits continue to get plenty of hits. To gain up to date information join both groups. There is no fee to join. Check them out at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PMTC/> or search Pine Mountain Trail Conference from your Facebook page. The Yahoo Group has become a great source to give or gain information concerning the PMTC.

Articles for the Highland Sojourner

If you have any article concerning the Pine Mountain Trail or adventures that you've had will hiking the Pine Mountain Trail, please submit them. You may send them to Jeremy Williams at jnwillia@uky.edu.

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.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to:

**Pine Mountain Trail Conference, Inc.
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