

SUSQUEHANNOCK HIKER

Newsletter of the Susquehannock Trail Club

On Foot in Potter County.....God's Country

PO Box 643, Coudersport, PA 16915 www.stc-hike.org info@stc-hike.org

The purposes of the STC are to build and maintain trails, aid in the conservation of wetlands and wildlife and promote good fellowship through the medium of hiking and nature study.

Summer 2025



On the STS in 2025

The STS trail register at the Williams farm recorded the names of eleven thru-hikers in May, several of whom have already sent in circuit hiker logs. Brian Johnson of Port Matilda, PA, sent the photos above, of an antler shed he found, of his friend Melissa (Lancaster, PA) delighting in Mile Marker One as their group of three came to the last mile of their counter-clockwise backpack on the trail, and of some of the wildlife they spotted, peacefully resting trailside: a newborn fawn, and a yellow-phase rattlesnake. David Eshbaugh (Mayport, PA), leader of the trio, was making his fourth circuit of the trail, but his first going CCW. The group connected via a Facebook group called "Backcountry Junkies"!

President's Message

Wanda Shirk



Protecting what we can...

In April I attended a two-day workshop on trail design and maintenance, hosted at French Creek State Park by PPFF – Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, the umbrella organization of two groups with which the STC is affiliated, Friends of Lyman Run State Park and Friends of Ole Bull State Park. As I walked and worked with Marci Mowery, president of PPFF, in the hands-on portion of the workshop, we talked about books, among other things.

I usually read a couple dozen books a year, mostly history, science, ethics, government, social issues – and *trails* (usually AT thru-hike accounts!) – and *trees*. Marci recommended *How to Love a Forest*, by Ethan Tapper, so in spite of stacks of books here as high as I am tall, waiting and wanting to be read, I ordered the book and read it promptly.

Ethan Tapper is a young man who was able to buy 385 acres of Vermont forest land, available at a reasonable price because it was hillside land unsuitable for farming or development – presumably like much of our Susquehannock State Forest. All trees of value had recently been logged off. Ethan, like some of us, is pretty literally a tree-hugger. He wanted to love the forest back to health and beauty.

Ethan's initial thinking was that to love a forest, you just let it go, to take whatever course nature has for it. It did not take long for him to realize what we all know if we are observant hikers in this century. Letting woodland go, unaided, will not bring back the old forests of pines, hemlocks, chestnuts, elms, and other softwoods and hardwoods that once stood. Clear-cutting, toxic fungi, and invasives of many sorts have changed our forests forever.

One of the invasives Ethan battled was barberry. We are fortunate that so far, only one section of the STS is under attack by barberry: the hill above East Fork Rd. at the Williams farm, approx. STS mile 64.5, historically called "Three Stone Quarries Trail." The flagstone quarry locations can still be seen, but the dominant feature of the entire hillside is acres and acres of barberry. I call it "Barberry Hill." As luck would have it, that is the section that was assigned to me when I volunteered, years ago, to maintain a section of the STS.

Barberry is prickly and nasty, and the bushes metastasize rapidly. They will quickly crowd out all other understory so that other species – the trees we'd like to see – have no chance at daylight or space to grow. Barberry bushes will reach out across a trail and close it to hikers. To make matters worse, mice love it, and ticks love mice, so the place you are most likely to pick up a tick – and pick up Lyme Disease – is where you are pushing your way through barberry.

Ethan learned that there were three ways to attack the problem. The first was manually. He spent a day physically uprooting barberry plants. After hours of miserable labor, he had barely cleared a few square yards, and he knew there were still roots underground that would sprout again. The second approach was mechanically – with a brushcutter. This cleared yardage faster, but roots, of course, remained to regenerate. Ethan finally resorted to the final solution – chemical means. To get rid of the barberry, he would have to spray. Otherwise, there would never in any foreseeable future be an opportunity for good trees to find space and to root and create a beautiful forest again.

My attacks on barberry hill have only been with annual brushcutter expeditions up the 600' ascent to keep the trail open. There is no way we of the STC can clear the whole hill of barberry. We are fortunate that we do not have some of the invasives I have seen on some other trails, such a stretch on the Finger Lakes Trail entirely closed by Japanese knotweed. Nevertheless, we are saddened to know that the chestnuts and elms of the past will not be back, sad to see fallen ash trees and the shriveled leaves of beech blight disease and we wonder if our hemlocks will survive the wooly adelgid.

We do what we can to protect our forests and our trails.

I've heard that goats will eat barberry....

Float Trip

By Penny Weinhold

With picture perfect weather & temperatures, the S.T.C. water outing was enjoyed by five club members. Pine Creek Outfitters, Ansonia has very sturdy float tubes for participants. The Pine Creek, back in time, was named "Tiadaghton", meaning River of Pines, by Native Indians of the area. In season it has various recreational opportunities fishing, canoeing, rafting, and our choice - tubing.

Those pictured are Penny Weinhold, Coudersport; Larry Holtzapple, Wellsboro; Pat Childs, Wellsville, NY; Barry Fry, Colorado; and Wanda Shirk, Genesee.



Galeton Parade

The STC was represented in the Galeton Independence Celebration Parade on July 5 by Bill Boyd, Angela Jackson, Barry Fry, Willis Sumer, Elizabeth Kapoor, Janet Smith, and Wanda Shirk. Also, but missing from photo: John Zimmer and Dave Hajzus.



Photo by Dave Hajzus

TREES WANTED!

By Wanda Shirk

The Lumber Museum saws pine, spruce, and hemlocks - - any conifers and softwoods -- when they run their saw mill on special occasions such as the Barkpeelers Convention. In recent years, they have been donating the sawed boards to the STC for use in our shelter construction projects.

Paul Fedalen, a hiker and STC member, is the Lumber Museum maintenance supervisor who handles the sawing. Acquiring trees is important -- and sometimes a challenge. If any of our members has a tree, or trees, that you would like to have removed from your property, or if you know of anyone who does, please contact us, or contact Paul at the Lumber Museum. He can come and cut the tree, if it needs to be cleared, and

will haul it away. In the past year he has driven over an hour to acquire trees, but that distance from the Lumber Museum should be about the max.

Please keep your eyes and ears open for any possible tree donations. It is a help to both the Lumber Museum and the STC!



In Praise of Trail Shelters

By Wanda Shirk

The STS has many features to recommend it as the best hiking trail in the state. Some are given us by nature, such as the Hammersley pool. Some have come from history, such as the CCC-built Dynamite House. Some are due to location, by passing through Ole Bull and Patterson State Parks, or to design, such as that this trail is a loop, rather than a linear trail -- a great convenience for many backpackers.

However, much acclaim comes to the STS because of the work done by our club: the annual work of clearing blowdowns and brush, the mile marker project, and the larger construction projects such as signage, bridges, and especially our trail shelters. Of the 25 longest footpaths in Pennsylvania, only a handful have any shelters at all, and the STS is second only to the Laurel Highlands Trail in the number of shelters available to backpackers.

At a recent stop at the Gravel Lick Shelter -- rebuilt in September 2024 after having burned down in Nov. 2023 -- we gleaned the following comments from the shelter log this April and May:

April 15: Travis Walborn

Stopping by to dry and repair shoes. Might as well make some lunch. Very grateful this shelter is here, as it just started hailing some pea-sized chunks. Over half way on my clockwise STS adventure.

April 17: Ansel and Brian from Ohio

Spent last night in Cross Fork after two cold days. Kinneys and the motel were wonderful. Super folks in Cross Fork! Hiked up through the Hammersley. Fantastic area! Watched BIG TROUT swimming in the pool! Wasn't sure if Gravel Lick Shelter had been rebuilt after the fire. Quite happy with the new shelter. Thank you to the trail crew and everyone involved with the rebuild. Also, big thanks for the water cache. We were a little light on water. Clockwise loop. Happy Trails, All!

April 21: Rob Potter, STS clockwise

This shelter was a welcome sight. Thank you for all the hard work. The clean-up here obviously took a lot of time and resources. It did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Thanks again, Rob

April 25: Brad of many names from Downingtown, PA

Enjoyed walking through Hammersley. Saw a mama bear and 3 cubs. It's nice this shelter is here. Thanks for all the H2O. Day 4.

April 26: Clair from Lebanon, Merle from Ephrata, Steve from Paradise (PA), with sons and grandson. Annual father-son trip into Hammersley.

Will camp here after a rainy night along Hammersley Creek. Thanks for the shelter and firewood.

May 13: Nate, Lyn, and Caleb

Happy for a place to duck in and dry out after a day in the rain. :) We thru-hiked 29 years ago, and this is our first time back since. So glad it's still here and being loved.

May 23: Dawn and Sandy hiking CW

After hiking all day in rain, we were so thankful to have a shelter to dry out in. VERY thankful for the water that was in the jugs. (No water close that we could see.) Loved the bench beds. Thank you to volunteers for the care of this spot. Happy Trails!

Earlier entry, Nov. 11, 2024: Oliver and Jonathan, Union County, PA

We are on our last hike and we are deer hunting and now we are having lunch. Thank you volunteers for keeping the trail nice. Oliver, 8 years old [spellings are Oliver's]

[Oliver and his dad completed the STS in 20 hikes from 2022-2024, with dad Jonathan archery hunting on many of the hikes. He got a deer on the third hike. Oliver was ages 6-8 over the span of these hikes. Oliver and Jonathan sent us a wonderful trail log, and they are circuit hikers 1338 and 1339.]

Currently the STS has 8 lean-to style shelters:

Cherry Springs Shelter - mile 13.3.

Bolich Run Shelter - mile 17.8

Spook Hollow Shelter - mile 30.6

Scoval Branch Shelter - mile 42.5

Gravel Lick Shelter - mile 59.7

Wild Boy Shelter - mile 68.7

Ford Hollow Shelter - mile 74.5

Sunken Branch Shelter - mile 78.7

The Dynamite House at mile 10.7 can also be used as a small shelter for a couple people.

Nearby streams provide water access at the Bolich run, Wild Boy, and Ford Hollow Shelters. Water can be found a bit down the trail from the Scoval shelter. Our volunteers try to supply water for the other shelters.

Ed McCrea makes a circuit every two or three weeks in hiking season, taking water first to Sunken Branch Shelter, then down the Sunken Branch Rd. to the Dynamite House, and then out West Branch Rd. and down Rt. 44 to hike water in to the Cherry Springs Shelter.

Club vice president John Zimmer takes water to the Spook Hollow and Gravel Lick shelters, often when he is shuttling hikers to Twelve Mile Rd. (Spook Shelter) or McConnell Rd. (Gravel Lick Shelter) for Hammersley hikers.

In addition to water, we try to supply various other amenities at our shelters. There is always a fire ring, thanks to Ron Heath acquiring a supply of old truck tire rims. We try to keep a pair of loppers and a bow saw at each shelter for backpackers who might want to trim back vegetation or cut dead wood for campfires -- though our sawyers frequently stock small supplies of firewood under the floors of the shelters where it can be protected from rain.

Bill Boyd has made small picnic tables for each shelter. They are small (for four people) and light so they can be kept protected inside the shelter but easily lifted out if backpackers want more floor space in the

shelter. Most shelters also have some chairs and/or log benches for sitting around campfires.

Inside each shelter, a mailbox holds a shelter log book, a supply of maps, pens, and often other amenities such perhaps band-aids. Shelters have clothes lines and clothes pins for hanging wet clothes to dry. Sturdy wooden pegs hold backpacks. Two bench-bunks have space for sleeping bags so backpackers can be off the floor and stash their boots and other gear underneath them, which essentially doubles available floor space.

A jar contains matches, a lighter, and some candles, with a note to "Use candle to sustain flame until campfire lights." (Matches don't hold a flame long enough.)

Most of the shelters have hammock hooks for hammock-hikers; we have a few still needing hook installments.

Most of the shelters have a "comfort station" somewhere out back -- just a box with a toilet seat and a lid.

All shelters are topped-off with an American flag, and often a Native American dream-catcher.

We aim to have a broom in each shelter, and since the Gravel Lick fire, we have put 5-gallon buckets at the back eaves of shelters to catch rain water for emergency use.

We hope to build a shelter at mile 36.8, at the base of Morgan Hollow, along Young Woman's Creek at "Ted's Truss" this summer, and we are happy to have received a \$500 grant from KTA (Keystone Trails Association) for that project. Mark Kelly (sometimes with his wife Denise) and Doug Wetherbee (with grandson Luke) head up the construction crew. Total cost per shelter currently runs us about \$1500.

Every STC member is part of every project. Membership dues and donations keep us going, so the notes of thanks in shelter and trail logs go to everyone who supports the club just by belonging. How else can you help? Currently, we could use donations of a couple of brooms for shelters, shovels for "outhouse" dirt turnovers, and bow saws and loppers, if you have extras of such things in your tool shed or garage.

To all - *Thanks for being part of our great club and our STS community!*

Hiking Program

By Pat Childs

The STC has REACTIVATED OUR CLUB LED HIKING PROGRAM. This will enable many hikers to have a safe hiking experience, spot cars for a linear hike, hike trails they aren't familiar with, ones they need to complete the STS circuit, build camaraderie with other club members, and possibly get new club members by inviting the public to join our hikes. We aim to offer 2 hikes a month, on weekdays or weekend. Begun in June, attendance has been excellent.

Hike leaders are needed to run the program. They will choose a trail, write a brief description to be sent to me, collect names of attendees, organize car placement and lead hikers along the trail.

We are all busy, so to allow leaders to wait until they know they have an available date, we created HIKERS and HIKE LEADERS group emails to which notices will be sent. They will also be posted on Facebook, the STC website, Google group, and the newspaper.

We NEED leaders and hikers. If you did not sign up for the email groups at a club meeting, please send your contact information to me. If anyone has a trail they would like to explore (STS or other) or circuit section they need, please let me know and we will find a leader for it.

Let's meet on the trail!

Pat at 585-610-0715 or childs4@roadrunner.com

2024 brought an enthusiastic response to our REACTIVATED CLUB LED HIKING PROGRAM.!

- No listed hike was cancelled due to the lack of hikers wishing to go.
- We had Hikes of 3-6 miles on a variety of terrains.
- 2025 has started with 3 hikes already completed.
- We need more hike leaders!
- Remember: It is important that you sign up with the leader the night before so the group does not leave without you.

COME JOIN THE FUN AS A HIKER OR HIKE LEADER.

Recent Hikes

April , Blue Rock Run

Saturday June 21 Wayne Baumann led a 3 mile hike from Cherry Springs Fire Tower to West Branch Road.

On Saturday, May 24th, five intrepid hikers braved the soggy trails on a 3 "ish" mile hike through the Susquehannock State Forest. The hike started on a section of the Billy Lewis Trail.

Reporting Blowdowns

By Wanda Shirk

We appreciate having blowdowns reported to us so we can attend to them as soon as possible.

Your report becomes more helpful with information that is as complete as possible, such as

* Is the blowdown a step-over, a climb-over, a duck-under (how high above trail?), or a clamber-around?

* Or is this a tree-top-branches mess? Or a multi-trunker?

* What is the approximate diameter of the trunk that needs to be cleared?

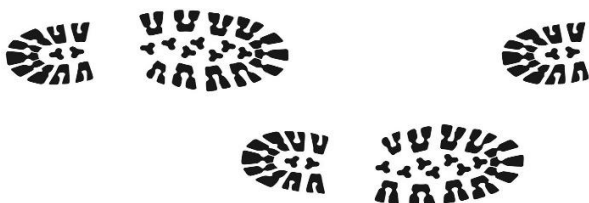
* This lets us know whether we can use a handsaw or need a small chain saw or perhaps a max-size chain saw.

* Where is the location -- approximately how far before or after a particular mile point?

* GPS coordinates are optional but can be helpful if you can provide them.

* Photos are also helpful if you can send them.

Reports can be made to our club email address: info@stc-hike.org



STC MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Lois Morey

Corresponding and Membership Secretary

I thought it might be of interest to our members this time to write a bit of the early history of how the STS and STC came into existence. Many of you are new to our club and you may have wondered how it all began. Since I have also been the archivist for a good many years and the fact that I still have access to the club records, it is now just a matter of doing the research to refresh my memory and present what I hope to be information that will interest you. This may very well end up to be Part 1 of a series of articles because I tend to get carried away when I start typing, as many of you know.

The Susquehannock Trail System was first conceived as a hiking trail in 1966 from an original idea by the late William D. Fish, Jr., publisher of the "Potter Enterprise", now known as the "Potter Leader-Enterprise", the weekly local newspaper here in Coudersport, PA. He was an early charter member.

That same year, Potter County's tourist promotion agency, known then as Potter County Recreation, Inc., appointed William D. Fish, Jr., Wil Ahn (who later was our club president for 30 years), Harry Kinney and Veryl Scheibner to a committee to pursue this original idea. After several planning meetings with other interested local parties, the actual work on the trail was started in January of 1967 with the laying-out, marking, and physical improvements of the trail system that consisted of old CCC fire trails, abandoned railroad grades, dirt logging roads and pipeline clearings. The initial flagging of the proposed STS was mostly the work of Tom Fitzgerald, Bob Davey, and Tom Leete. They were helped by Bill Fish, Wil Ahn, Jim Thomas, Joe Heimel, Jayne Fitzgerald, Kay Davey and Betty Ahn. Temporary officers were elected in February 1967 and the club was in the formative stages. There are three that are still members today (Jayne Knight Fitzgerald, Kay and Robert F. Davey, Jr.).

Welcome New Members

Regular Memberships:

- Deborah Gross & Jim Bedick, Allentown, PA
- Cassio's Cottage, Coudersport, PA
- Ned Corcoran, Nazareth, PA
- Gregory & Robin Rapp, Coudersport, PA

New Circuit Hiker Award Recipients

- 1345 Jason Brock from Killbuck, Ohio

Newsletter Editor Needed!!

By Dave McMillan

The Fall Newsletter will be the last newsletter that I produce for the STC. At that time, I will have been editor for 7 years. Prior to that my wife, Roxanne, was editor for 7 years.

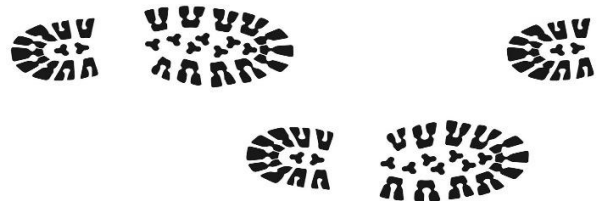
After a combined 14 years of being the Newsletter Editor it's time to have someone else take a turn.

The Editor need not be a local resident and it's a personally rewarding way to contribute to the club.

Knowing that it would take time to recruit a new editor, 2 ½ years ago I advised the officers and advisory board members that I wanted to step down from the editor position. (as well as the numerous other technology related tasks I had assumed for the club).

Alas, we still have not filled this position.

If you have an interest in taking on this position to help the club contact me at dvcmcmln@gmail.com or Wanda at wshirk49@outlook.com.





Susquehannock Trail Club
PO Box 643
Coudersport PA 16915

2025 Event Schedule

Monthly meetings start at noon with a dish to share meal followed by the club meeting, unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, July 12	Monthly Meeting Dish to share meal followed by meeting.	PA Lumber Museum
Saturday, Aug 9	Monthly Meeting Dish to share meal followed by meeting.	PA Lumber Museum
Saturday, Sept 13	Monthly Meeting Dish to share meal followed by meeting.	PA Lumber Museum
Saturday, Oct 11	Monthly Meeting Dish to share meal followed by meeting.	PA Lumber Museum
Saturday, Nov 8	Monthly Meeting Dish to share meal followed by meeting.	PA Lumber Museum