

# Hiking the AT

Apr 22 – Sep 30, 2013

Mark “Outback” Smith



# What is the AT?

- Conceived by Benton MacKaye—He proposed a series of work, study, and farming camps along the ridges of the Appalachian Mountains, with a trail connecting them, from the highest point in the North (Mt. Washington in New Hampshire) to the highest in the South (Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina).
- Hiking was an incidental focus
- Myron Avery was ATC Chairman 1932-1952



Benton MacKaye & Myron Avery





April 30, 2013: GA/NC border



May 30, 2013: Shady Valley, TN





# What is the AT?

- Longest continuously marked footpath in the world
- Springer Mountain, GA - Mount Katahdin, ME
- Completed in 1937 and is a unit of the National Park System
  - Managed under a unique partnership between the public and private sectors
  - 31 trail maintaining clubs
- First national scenic trail, designated in 1968





# Wildlife



Jun 3, 2013:  
Grayson  
Highlands  
State Park,  
wild ponies





# What is the AT?

- Length in 2013 = **2185.9 miles (3,517.87 Kilometers)**
- Touches 14 states, crosses 6 National Parks & 8 National Forests
- 250+ shelters exist along the Trail













# Terminology

- **Thru-hiker:** walk the entire AT in a continuous journey
- **Section-hiker:** Hike the entire AT in sections over years
- **Flip-flopper:** Thru-hike the entire AT in discontinuous sections to avoid crowds, extremes in weather, or start on easier terrain
- **NOBO:** Northbound hiker
- **SOBO:** Southbound hiker



Largest tree on AT, Pawling, NY  
Estimated at over 300 years old



# Terminology

- **Trail Angels provide Trail Magic:** People that provide free help to hikers. This is a HUGE moral booster.
- They provide food, water, shelter, rides, etc.





# More Trail Magic



Caledonia State Park, PA



Beer Stein  
Wind Gap, PA





# Wildlife



Sep 7, 2013  
Gentian Pond  
Shelter, ME





# Getting Around

White Blaze – marking for the AT

Blue Blaze – marking for side trails to shelters, water, etc.



Two White Blazes -  
Change of direction  
marking

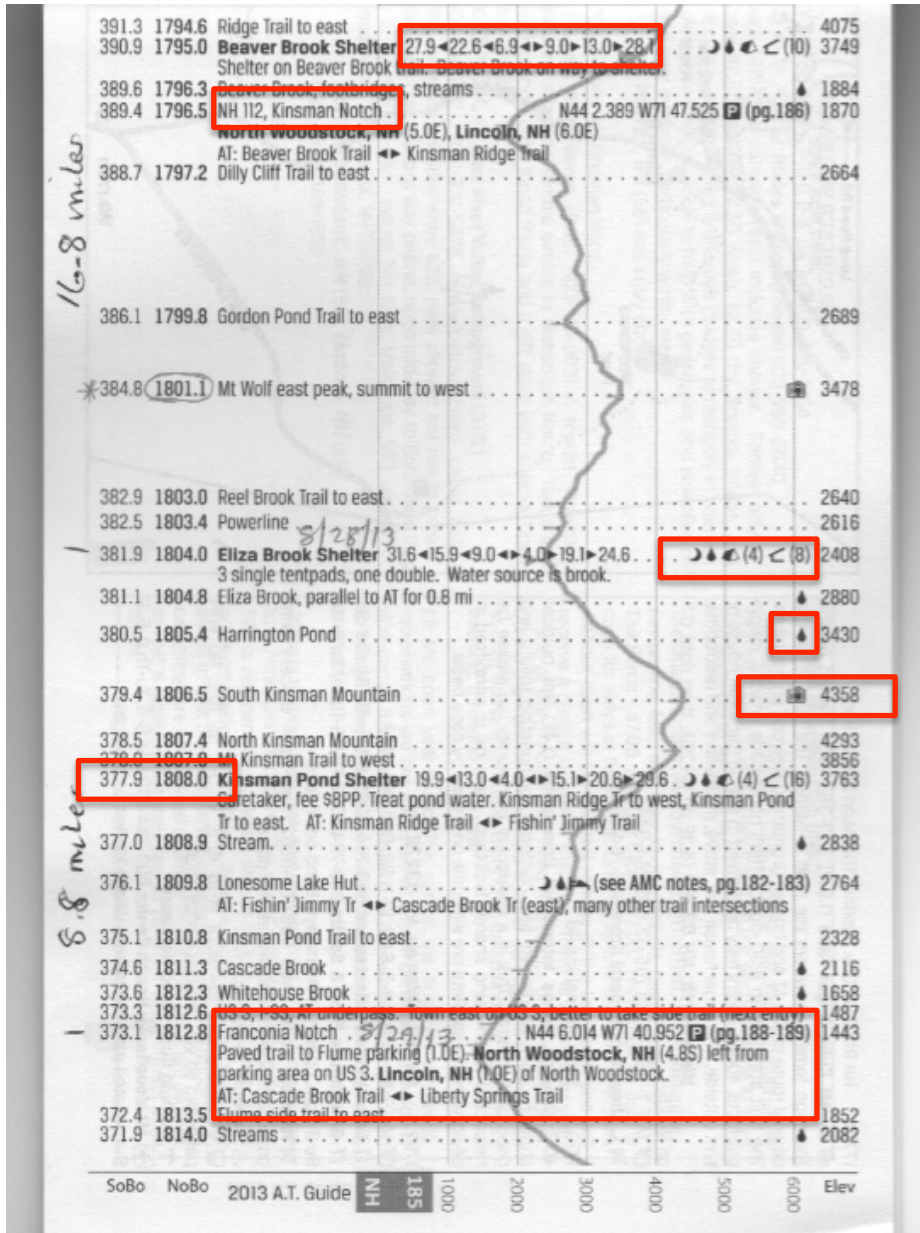






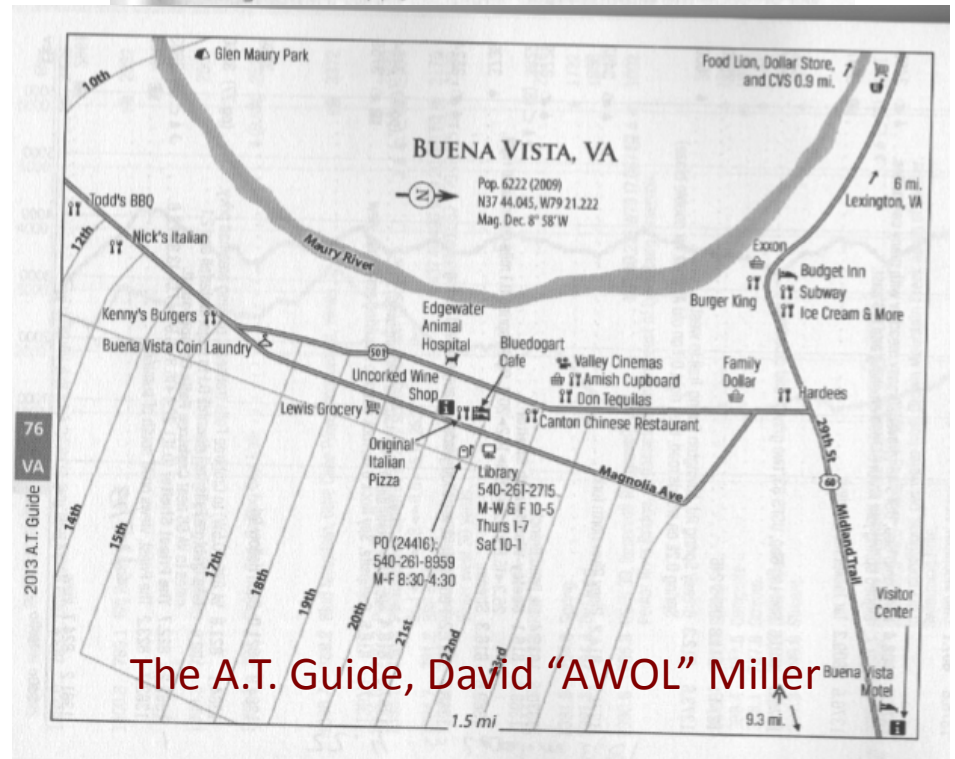


# Getting Around



### Symbols and Notations

Any source of drinking water	Post Office
Seasonal water source	Will hold mail
AT Shelter	Privy
Camping, tent site	Public restroom
Hostel	Trailhead trash can
Hotel, Cabin or B&B	Laundry
Shower available w/o stay	Computer available
Outfitter	Wireless (WiFi)
Shuttle, Bus or Taxi	Train Station
Any place that serves food	Pharmacy
Long term resupply	First Aid



The A.T. Guide, David "AWOL" Miller



# Shelter



Congdon Shelter, VT



Mile 321.1 campsite, NC/TN



Overmountain Shelter, NC



Overmountain Shelter, NC



# Hikers

- **2,000-Milers By Decade**

- 1930s 5
- 1940s 3
- 1950s 14
- 1960s 37
- 1970s 770
- 1980s 1,422
- 1990s 3,313
- 2000s 5,890
- 2010s 3,029
- **Total 14,485**



May 7, 2013:  
Cable Gap  
Shelter, NC





Old Barn near USFS 50, TN





Near Bellvale, NY



# Hikers

## 2013 HIKER COUNTS (UPDATED NOV 20, 2013)

### ***Northbound (Georgia To Maine)***

- Springer Mtn., Ga. 2700
- Harpers Ferry, W.Va. (1,017 miles) 1130
- Katahdin, Maine (2,184 miles) \*548

### ***Southbound (Maine To Georgia)***

- Katahdin, Maine 336
- Harpers Ferry, W.Va. (1,167 miles) 167
- Springer Mtn., Ga. (2,184 miles) \*82

### ***Flip-Flop***

- Harpers Ferry, W.Va. 97
- Completions reported \*5026

### ***Section (More Than One Year)***

- Harpers Ferry, W. Va. 450
- Completions reported \*132

\*Numbers will increase as more completion reports come in



Rocks of PA







## 2,000 Milers in Recent Years

Northbounders	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Springer Mountain, GA (start)	1,150	1,125	1,250	1,425	1,460	1,700
Neels Gap, GA (30 miles)	1,076	1,005	1,150	1,325	N/A	N/A
Harpers Ferry, WV (1,000 miles)	659	613	667	709	747	949
Katahdin, ME (finish)	354	320	363	399	434	464
<b>% complete</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>27%</b>

Southbounders hike from Katahdin to Springer Mountain in one continuous journey. They represent about 10 percent of total reported 2,000-milers

Flip-floppers complete the Trail in twelve months or less, but with an alternate itinerary. They make up about 5 percent of reported 2,000-milers.

Section-hikers complete the Trail in more than one trip. They represent about 20 percent of total 2,000-milers.



# Shelter





# Noteworthy Hikers

- **First 2,000-miler**
  - 1936, Myron Avery
- **Early section-hikers**
  - Five others reported completing the entire Trail between 1939 and 1946
- **First reported thru-hiker**
  - 1948, Earl V. Shaffer - northbound
  - 1965, He hiked again - southbound
  - On his third thru-hike, 50 years after his first, he became the oldest thru-hiker at age 79, a distinction he held until 2004.



Earl Shaffer



# Keeping your food from Bears



Bear boxes



Bear bagging options



# Noteworthy Hikers

- **First female thru-hiker**
  - Mildred Norman reported a flip-flop hike in 1952.
- **Oldest thru-hiker**
  - 2004, Lee “Easy One” Barry, at age 81 when he completed his fifth hike (and second thru-hike) of the A.T.
  - Only 11 thru-hike completions have been reported by hikers age 70 or over, and most of those hikers had already thru-hiked the A.T. at least once before.
- **Oldest section-hiker**
  - 1972 to 1975, completing the Trail after he turned 86



Spring near Garfield Ridge Shelter, NH





Mt. Moosilauke, NH



Near Mt. Lafayette/Garfield, NH



# Noteworthy Hikers



- **Youngest thru-hiker**
  - 1980, A 6-year-old boy became the youngest person to hike the A.T. when he completed a flip-flop thru-hike with his parents
- **Youngest female thru-hiker**
  - 2002, was 8 when she completed hiking the Trail as part of a family group.



- **Youngest female section-hiker**
  - 1984 – 1997, Kimberley (Raymond) Emberg, started the Trail at age 3 and completed the Trail at age 15. Four generations of her family are 2000-milers.



# Noteworthy Hikers

- **First solo female thru-hiker.**
  - 1955, Emma “Grandma Gatewood,” mother of 11 children and grandmother of 23, was 67 when she first hiked the Trail.
  - In 1957, she completed her second thru-hike at age 69, holding the unofficial title of oldest female thru-hiker for the next 50 years.
  - In 1964, she became the first person to complete the A.T. three time when she finished a section-hike. She was famous for wearing only “Keds” tennis shoes and carrying a small knapsack.
- **Oldest female thru-hiker.**
  - 2007, Nancy “Magellan” Gowler, at age 71 when she completed her second thru-hike.
  - 2012, Barbara "Mamaw B" Allen, at 71 years old.
- **Oldest female section-hiker.**
  - 2004, Beverly "High 5-R" LaFollette, completed the Trail at the age of 80, after 11 years of section-hiking.



Gramma Gatewood







# Eating

- Anything you want - calories, calories, calories!
- To save weight, some people eliminate the stove





# Trivia



- **Speed Records**

- Supported Hike:

- Jennifer Pharr Davis, 2011
    - 46 days, 11 hours, 20 minutes
    - **Approximately 46.5 miles/day**

- Un-supported Hike:

- Matthew Kirk, 2013
    - 58 days, 9 hours, 40 minutes
    - **Approximately 37.0 miles/day**



Fording the Piscataquis River, ME





Mahoosuc Notch, ME





Mahoosuc Notch, Maine



# Trivia

- Average male burns 5,000 – 7,000 calories/day
- Approximately 4 – 5 million steps to complete trail
- The total elevation gain of hiking the entire A.T. is equivalent to climbing Mt. Everest 16 times
- A typical thru-hike takes 4 – 6+ months
- Highest Point: 6,643 ft, Clingman's Dome, TN
- Lowest Point: 124 ft, Bear Mountain Zoo, NY



Stratton Pond, VT







# Wildlife



Rattlesnake near Palmerton, PA



Leaving Duncannon, PA near Clarks Ferry Shelter





Kittatinny Mountain, NJ



Between Oquossoc and Rangeley, ME



# Personal Data

	12/20/2010	12/22/2011	After Hike (10/31/2013)
Weight	209 lbs (94.80 KG)	210 lbs (95.25 KG)	167 lbs (75.75 KG)
Blood Pressure	118/80	132/90	100/72
Pulse	76	80	68

	Miles/Day (with zero days)	Miles/Day without zero days)	Total Miles for State
GA	9.0	9.0	78.5
NC	11.8	12.2	310.6
TN	16.6	16.6	74.1
VA	14.1	15.4	538.3
WV	11.8	17.7	17.8
MD	20.8	20.8	40.6
PA	15.9	15.9	229.7
NJ	16.7	16.7	72.1
NY	15.5	15.5	96.9
CT	15.6	15.6	44.3
MA	13.3	15.5	90.5
VT	17.6	17.6	149.8
NH	11.1	11.9	160.9
ME	12.3	12.8	281.8
AVERAGE	13.4	13.7	2185.9

**Zero Day:** A rest day with no hiking on the AT. However, You typically walk a lot in town to do laundry, resupply, etc.

**Nero Day:** Hiking a short day (1-10+ miles) into or out of a town.



