



# THE CUMBERLAND TRAILHEAD

Friends of the Trails

October 2025

# THIS ISSUE

- 1 [Trail Construction and Maintenance](#)
- 5 [A Call for Help](#)
- 6 [Annual Membership Meeting](#)
- 6 [Reflections of Autumn](#)
- 7 [Citizen Scientist Opportunities](#)
- 8 [Why We Build Trails, Fairfield Crew](#)
- 9 [Dogs and Snakes on the Trails](#)
- 10 [The CT Bushwhackers](#)
- 12 [Hiking Marathon](#)
- 13 [Tennessee Tree Day](#)
- 13 [Newsletter Submissions](#)

Sign the [petition](#) to restore the natural meadows at Meadow Park!



[Why we should care...](#)

*Above Photo by Ryan Moehring, USFWS, Public Domain*

*Cover Photo by Jim Darr of the CT Bushwhackers*

*"Sunset at Cumberland Gap Pinnacle Overlook"*

# Friends of the Trails, Trail Construction and Maintenance

by Brenda Gibbon

## Meditation Trail

### Community Kids Help Out!

The Cumberland Forest Friends have become a Trail Adopter for the Meditation Trail. This group of energetic young friends took a couple of days to clean up the trail.

Friends of the Trails volunteers built two benches for the trail that Kristy Payne and the Girl Scouts painted. Ken Smith and Steve Gibbon cleared spaces, placed the benches at the creek, and Danny Terry placed anchors at the bench next to the creek. Thank you to everyone who donated their time and effort to make this trail even more beautiful!

## Cumberland Mountain State Park

### Boy Scout Bridge Storm Damage Repair

A large group of Cumberland County trail builders worked together to get the Pioneer Loop's Boy Scout bridge placed near its original position. After removing the handrails, the group winched the bridge back into place. The handrails have been replaced. Park management is planning to install a new bridge later.

Other plans are under consideration for additional FOTT work sessions to remove roots and other tripping hazards on the Park's trails.

John Conrad and Jerry Brown met with Mark Houston, the new CMSP Park Manager, to discuss plans for the park trails. The discussion included an Overnight Trail shortcut and a Pioneer Trail extension.

continued. . .



Above: Anna Groom, Ron Woodworth, and Linda Klingerman along with a team of kids, cleaned up the Meditation Trail.

Top Right: Girl Scout Troop 2801 brightened up two benches!

Right: John Conrad, John Partyka, Linda Klingerman, and Ken Smith at the Boy Scout Bridge



Continued . . .

### **New Member - [Trail Construction and Maintenance Committee](#)**

Steve and I are happy to announce that Ron Woodworth has agreed to join our Construction and Maintenance team. Many of you know Ron and appreciate the hard work and expertise he brings to our team. Thank you, Ron!

### **Join Us!**

Have you wondered what goes into building and maintaining trails? Join our construction and maintenance team to find out. Everyone is welcome, and it is a wonderful way to make new friends who enjoy hiking and working on trails! Each of our sessions is limited to two hours with water and rest breaks.

Upon arrival to the work site, a new member is introduced to the group and paired with a current member. After the team leader goes over the tasks for the day, each member selects the tool for their job. Work ranges from light, such as raking, pruning, lopping, and digging, to heavy rock work. Extra tools are provided for those who do not have their own.

[Join the Team of Crossville Workers](#)—It is fulfilling and fun work!

### **Trail Repair Requests**

The fastest way to get a trail issue resolved is to [submit a request for trail maintenance](#). To submit the request, go to <https://crossvilletrails.com/maintenance/>, select the name of the trail, complete the form, and click the Submit button. Please be as detailed as possible. Including the number of the nearest 911 emergency marker and photos will be extremely helpful for the trail crew.

**Brenda Gibbon**  
**Chair, Trail Construction and Maintenance Committee**  
**Email: [fott.tcm@gmail.com](mailto:fott.tcm@gmail.com)**

**Ron Woodworth and  
Steve Gibbon getting a  
rock for a new step.**



# A Call for Help for Friends of the Trails

By John Conrad, President

It may be a little premature to look ahead to the end of the year but it is approaching fast and we want to make sure that the organization remains strong so that it can continue to provide the services that are so much appreciated by the community.

We continue to coordinate the maintenance of trails throughout the county under the supervision of Steve & Brenda Gibbon, but we are also focused on organizing hiking events. We have just completed our 11th Hiking Marathon which continues to grow in size and popularity with 3,400 registrations this year and has become a beloved, local institution.

The Spring Ultra Hike, organized by Michelle Bayless, challenges hikers to complete 100 miles of trails within Cumberland County in three months from Feb 15th to May 15th each year. The 2025 SUH had over 300 registrations and 130 hikers completed the 100 miles. An amazing achievement for our community.



## All this is leading up to a call for help. . .

All these activities need an incredible number of volunteers at all levels. We are looking for two new Board Members to consider our strategic direction. Mary deWolf is retiring from the board after being its secretary since the start in 2015! A tough act to follow! We could also add another board member to the team, hopefully someone with hiking and trail-building experience.

In addition, Shari Hahn is retiring. Shari has done two big jobs each year: she oversees the annual trails picnic in June and she oversees the T-shirt distribution at the Trails Festival in October. It will be tough to replace her.

All our volunteers do a great job but they need help with all these activities. We always need hands on work done like shoveling dirt, building bridges, etc., but there is also a lot of behind-the-scenes work, with meeting minutes, map making, website maintenance, etc. etc. For example, it would be wonderful to have one person dedicated to purchasing: buying our T-shirts, bandanas, patches, trails signs, banners, business cards, etc. The list of opportunities goes on and on.

***We need a strong organization in place so we can hit the ground running in 2026!***

If you feel that you have some time to give to the Friends of the Trails please call or text John Conrad at (978) 604-4968 or email at [john@time2meet.com](mailto:john@time2meet.com).

January 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Wednesday, January 7th, 2026



Covenant/Cumberland Medical Center conference rooms entrance.

## Annual Membership Meeting by Mary deWolf

The 2025 annual membership meeting of the Friends of the Trails will be held on January 7, 2026, at 5 p.m. in the conference rooms at the Covenant/Cumberland Medical Center facility. The conference rooms are located on the second floor. Enter through the main entrance off Cleveland Street.

(See the associated image of the entrance.)

At this meeting we will elect new board members and officers. Attendees will also hear a summary of the 2025 activities, including the Spring Ultra Hike and 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Marathon, along with plans for 2026 events. The presentation will spotlight new trail prospects, along with opportunities to get involved in building and maintaining trails.

Don't miss this chance to learn the latest about the very popular Cumberland County hiking trails!

## Reflections of Autumn

*Or, Sitting on a boulder in the Obed River,  
(finally) alone with my dog and my thoughts.*  
by Anna Groom, Editor

Look not for perfection, for that you won't find.  
Let your eye catch beauty and what stirs your mind.

Leaves floating slowly down a sun-patched stream,  
Reflections of Autumn creating a gleam.

Fluffy white blobs that once were a flower  
Now cling to the stem in their last hour.

The sound of the water, soothing my soul,  
The wind high above, a leaf falls below.

Finally the birds sound and appear,  
When through stillness—'me' they do not hear.

When my pulse slows and my mind quiets down,  
I can breathe deeper, for what I was seeking—  
I have found.



# Citizen Scientist Opportunities



## TN Tech Biology Dept Studies Maypops

The TN Tech Biology Department needs your help! If you have maypops (purple passion flower, or passion fruit) on your property with fruits developing, we would appreciate you allowing us to collect some. We are doing a study on animal dispersal of the fruits. We are setting up *wildlife cameras to document animals that consume the fruits*. If you might be able to help, please email Windsor Kiefer at [wrkiefer42@tntech.edu](mailto:wrkiefer42@tntech.edu).



## Collect acorns. Restore white oaks.

*Our abundance can help other regions!*  
Help restore Tennessee's white oak trees! The 2025 White Oak Acorn Collection Program is running now through November 15th. White oaks are vital to our state's forests, supporting wildlife and the timber industry. To ensure their future, we need your help. [Click to see how you can contribute...](#)  
Don't want to send them in yourself? Email Anna Groom to collaborate with Cumberland Forest Friends. [annamargaret.tn@gmail.com](mailto:annamargaret.tn@gmail.com)



## Audubon's 126th Christmas Bird Count will be held from Dec 14, 2025 to Jan 5, 2026!

The Christmas Bird Count occurs Dec 14 to Jan 5 every season. Volunteers will work at the same time in many different locations for about 4 hours on 1 chosen day. *We need your eyes!*  
Local Coordinator: Anna Groom

[FAQ](#)

[How Can I Participate?](#)

[Donate](#)



We are often asked why we build trails and why we strive to build them so well.

## Why We Build Trails



Here is a recent photo of part of the Trail crew as we were rebuilding the trail!



So again this is why we build trails.... for everyone to enjoy!

**John DeVinney - FFG Trail Crew Supervisor**

Sharing a recent experience, I observed a 4-generation family, well over 40 members strong, in town for a celebration of life event. It was a massive caravan of cars that slid into the FFG Seven Bridges trailhead at 8am on a Sunday morning.

The group had members from across the country—Hawaii to Maine. Many toddlers and babes in backpacks to seniors with sticks charged down the Seven Bridges trail like they owned it. Roughly an hour later they returned, and what an excited group they remained, everyone talking at once, sharing the things they liked best on the trail and which way they chose to go, clearly they all had great fun.

The spokesperson of the group said they needed family-friendly event before they all split up and traveled back to their homes, and they picked our trail! I have no idea how our trail was chosen, but as a collective group, they said the hike was amazing and they were so grateful that we built the trail for them! Yes I did tell them that we (The Trail Crew ) built the trail just for them, at that point it did seem like the trail was just for them.

# Dogs and Snakes on the Trails

by Mike Bush

For the past few years I've been hiking a lot with my wife Mikki and our Australian Labradoodle Salsa. We've been up and down the Cumberland trail from the Kentucky border down to Chattanooga. One of my biggest concerns has been chances of snake interactions with Salsa. It took just one encounter to motivate me to do some research to be prepared for the worst.

We have 3 types of venomous snakes in TN to be concerned about. Copperheads are probably most abundant, followed by Timber Rattlers. Cottonmouth or Water Moccasins are here also but mostly in Western TN. Any of these can be deadly to a dog on a hiking trail.

My first recommendation is to do some basic training to keep your dog under control and even add some snake avoidance. I've worked with Salsa with a rubber snake to teach her not to approach a snake but to back away. Most snakes want to be left alone if they're not threatened.

**Being prepared has given me the confidence to bring our dog along to enjoy all our wonderful trails. We hope never to experience a snake bite but I feel better knowing what to do.**

## In the event of a snake bite I have prepared the following plan:

Try to identify the snake. Take a picture if possible to do so safely. Do not bring the snake with you even if it ends up dead. Handling a venomous snake is dangerous even after it has expired.

If you are sure it's a non venomous snake normal wound treatment is enough. Just clean and bandage if necessary. I have been practicing identifying snakes on a Facebook group called TN Snake Identification. You can also post a picture there and it will get identified quickly.

If the snake is venomous you should get your dog to an emergency vet with anti-venom as soon as practicable. This is required to treat a bite from any of the 3 venomous snakes mentioned.

Not many vets stock anti-venom. I could not locate one in Crossville. I have identified 3 close facilities that have it and will service your dog 24 hours a day for treatment. I keep these emergency numbers handy when hiking just in case. There is also a National Snake Bite Support Facebook page that will provide the treatment protocol that you can share with doctors for both canine and human snake bite victims.



Copeland Veterinary Hospital  
821 East 10th St  
Cookeville TN 38501  
(931) 528-1111

VCA Chattanooga  
2132 Amnicola Hwy  
Chattanooga TN 37406  
(423) 668-0051

Animal Emergency and Specialty  
Services  
10213 Kingston Pike  
Knoxville TN 37922  
(865) 693-4440

# THE CT BUSHWHACKERS COMPLETE THEIR MISSION TO HIKE THE CUMBERLAND TRAIL

## by Pat Buckner & the CT Bushwhackers

**The Cumberland Trail Bushwhackers**— Chris Love, Jim Darr, and Pat Buckner—have achieved their ambitious goal to section-hike the completed Cumberland Trail (CT) segments by the end of 2025!

The group began their adventure in late December 2024 regularly hiking the completed CT segments through October 1, 2025, with a major goal of encouraging others to explore and experience the natural beauty as well as rewarding challenges of this trail.

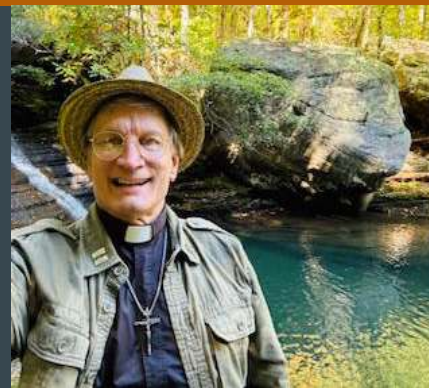
According to information recently obtained at Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park, the CT is comprised of approximately 221 open trail miles with an additional 63 trail miles under development.

The trio resides in Cumberland County, TN and brings their experience and passion for the outdoors to the community. Chris, a Tennessee native and former Army Captain, has a background in navigation, logistics, and survival skills and has been an invaluable asset on the trails. He is also a licensed pilot and has served as an airline captain for major commercial airlines. Known as the trail entertainer, provided humor by appearing as various characters including a Civil War Confederate Soldier, Sasquatch-Bigfoot, Ghoulish Pete, Ghost of Davy Crockett, and Father Mulcahy from the M\*A\*S\*H TV series.

continued . .



Above: Anderson and Cross Mountains  
Chris, Pam, Jim  
Below: McGill Creek Chris as Father  
Francis Mulcahy . .  
Amazing Resemblance!



Above: Lawson Mountain Overlook  
Below: McGill Creek



# THE CT BUSHWHACKERS

continued

Jim, originally from Ohio, and a retired Nuclear Power Plant Control Technician & Navy Submarine Chief Petty Officer, kept the group at a steady pace and often took the lead by relentlessly clearing debris along the way receiving the trail name, Tasmanian Devil. *See image*

Pat, a retired psychologist and Western North Carolina native, contributed her skills in planning, organizing, and communications—helping the group stay on track with their ambitious goal.

Currently, the CT Bushwhackers have logged a total of 374.76 CT Miles, exceeding the total Cumberland Trail mileage estimate of 284 miles- combined open trail and trail under development. Their total includes out-and-back mileage required of certain trails due to distance and parking constraints as well as CT connector and spur trails. The non-repeated portion of the total CT mileage was achieved through strategic planning and placement of shuttle vehicles at key trail heads and parking areas.



CT SEGMENTS	MILEAGE
Cumberland Mountain	34.2
New River	59.2
Bird Mountain	8.5
Obed Wild & Scenic River	48.7
Crab Orchard Mountain	23.9
Grassy Cove	42.6
The Falls	24.6
Piney River	33.05
Laurel-Snow	24.91
Three Gorges	40.2
North Chickamauga Creek	21.4
Tennessee River Gorge	13.5
<b>Total Miles</b>	<b>374.76</b>

In addition, the CT Bushwhackers kicked off the 2025 Cumberland County Hiking Marathon by joining the Happy Hikers Group for a Labor Day hike at the Airport South Loop, Meditation, and Obed River Park Trails. Members of both groups successfully completed the hiking marathon. The Happy Hikers Group has consistently advocated and encouraged the successful completion of the CT.



The CT Bushwhackers are appreciative of the support and assistance of the Cumberland Trails Conference and the Tennessee Trails Association, Statewide & Plateau Chapters. These organizations regularly publish the trekkers' CT progress in their newsletters. The group is grateful for the useful information and guidance provided by the Cumberland Trails Conference Office Administrator, Savana Keeton, plus the exceptional trail building and maintenance skills provided by Shauna Wilson & Crew and trail volunteer, Pete Berntsen.

# Cumberland County's Hiking Marathon

By Linda Klingerman

September in Cumberland County is more than just the start of fall — it's "Hiking Marathon" month, a 26.2-mile celebration of nature, community, and personal challenge. Throughout the month, hikers greet each other with "Have you started yet?" and "Isn't the new Cascade trail beautiful!" while swapping trail stories and sharing snapshots of pets, mushrooms, and snakes on social media. The Horony family, with their four daughters, has become a fan favorite to follow as they tackle each trail together.



For many, the marathon is a leisurely journey. For others, it's a test of endurance. On August 31st at midnight six adventurous hikers gathered like a band of trail-loving rebels to attempt the entire marathon in a single day, a portion of that in the dark. Their route was planned, gear packed, and enthusiasm was high.

Among them was Danny Terry, a veteran hiker with two one-day completions under his belt, now taking on his first night hike. Martha Wilson, a seasoned hiker and Mammoth March finisher, joined despite recent knee swelling. Joe Lucas, a trail builder and experienced hiker was on board. Christine Lister was eager to try both night hiking and a one-day finish, while Christine Doster couldn't resist the allure of hiking in the dark. And myself, Linda Klingerman, the initiator of this adventure....

At midnight, officially September 1st, we turned on our headlamps and started down the Red Trail, followed by the newly renovated Seven Bridges and then Glastowbury trails. At this point Joe was ready for coffee and he bid us farewell. We would see him and his wife later that day at another trailhead. Next was the new Cascade Trail followed by Overlook. Daylight broke as we headed out on the new Peavine South section of the Cumberland Trail.

With 13.2 miles completed Danny left us for a short break, though we knew he would finish that day. Christine Lister, battling foot pain, alternated between hiking and resting. Determined as she was, she would need to complete her marathon another day.

The remaining hikers continued south to Obed River Park, Meditation Trail, Airport South, and Soldier's Beach. At Meadow Park North trail rain turned into a downpour and the trail into a stream. But the skies cleared as we headed to Selby Loop to beat the park closing. Finally, to Cumberland Mountain State Park and the Short Pioneer Loop to finish.

At 4:30 PM — 16½ hours after our midnight start — three tired but triumphant hikers sat on a stone wall and logged their completions. Christine Doster had officially finished her first one-day marathon.

continued . . .

**SAVE THE DATE**  
*12<sup>th</sup> Annual*  
**TENNESSEE**  
**TREE DAY**  
**MARCH 21, 2026**

## New pick-up site at The Bean Pot this year!

For the first time ever The TN Environmental Council will have a tree Pick-Up Site in all 95 counties of Tennessee for Tree Day 2026, and Cumberland Forest Friends will be hosting one at The Bean Pot!

[Stay tuned for tree reservations coming the first week of November.](#)

## What is Tennessee Tree Day?

Tennessee Tree Day engages thousands of volunteers each year in a fun, family-friendly event planting native tree seedlings across the state. Tennessee Environmental Council works with TN Department of Forestry and other nurseries to provide bare-root native tree seedlings to Tennessee residents, utilizing our network of volunteer partners and local businesses. Since 2007, Tennessee Tree Day events have mobilized over 100,000 residents to plant over one million native trees in Tennessee and the surrounding states.

**FOTT**

**Friends of the Trails**

## Hiking Marathon *continued...*

The Hiking Marathon is a personal journey for everyone.

Helen Turner, who took an “Intro to Hiking” class this year and took her first step on a trail, completed both the marathon and the 10K with her friend Peggy. Naiad Kuhlman, a 96-year-old cancer survivor, continues to complete the 10K annually after hiking the full marathon in previous years. Howard Robb, 88, has conquered all 11 marathons and two ultra hikes.

Whether you're a first-time hiker or a seasoned trailblazer, Cumberland County's Hiking Marathon encourages you to make the challenge your own — one step, one trail, one story at a time.



## Newsletter Submissions

Have something to share?

Email [annamargaret.tn@gmail.com](mailto:annamargaret.tn@gmail.com) 300 words or less typed directly into an email with 1-4 images. Title the subject line FOTT and your subject. Please include author credits.