2022 April Cadillac Crew trip to Quercus Trail

Spring Has Sprung for the Cadillac Crew
By Steve E. Phillips et. al.

It was the perfect weekend for twenty two members of the Cadillac Crew to lend their labor and expertise to improve the already beautiful Quercus Trail in the Entry Run Tract. This PATC owned parcel of land abuts Shenandoah National Park and is managed by the able and charming Mark Walkup.

On Friday night, April 22, the Cadillac Crew began to gather at the amazing mountaintop retreat of Steve and Hope Barber. Steve “Kevin” Phillips also hosted Crew members. After playing frisbee and watching hummingbirds, the Crew enjoyed a hearty pasta meal produced by Laura McClain and Hope Barber. Laura also headed up the Saturday morning trencherman’s breakfast of eggs, bacon and fruit, after which the crew gathered for the tailgate safety talk before heading out to work.

Robert Fina and Dan Feer organized the day’s work by dividing the Cadillac Crew into teams. Mark Walkup made sure Crew members took care around the rare and beautiful emerging native plants along the trail.

Closest to the trailhead, Cadillac Crew veteran JT Tucker led a group in a swampy part of the trail where a spring seeped across the tread. Crew members located and moved large rocks to create a dry stepping stone path for hikers. It was muddy but rewarding work.

Further up the trail Dan Feer oversaw another stone project at a switchback, moving the trail away from the base of a large oak, creating a gentle climbing turn, anchored by the tree whose roots the Crew’s work now protects from foot traffic.

Above Dan's group, Janet Arici’s group toiled relentlessly building rock steps and a trail-stabilizing crib wall on another section of steep trail. Their work helps hikers safely gain needed elevation up the steep slope.

Laura McClain expertly supervised a crew adding finishing touches and final grading to a section of trail the crew had built last year, as well as moving several large rocks which were blocking a narrow defile the trail passes through. Now the gap is an inviting passage between large boulders rather than a rock scramble.

Other activities included the always popular lets-see-how-big-a-rock-we-can-carry. This trip also included a gasoline powered rock drill, so several crew members including Amanda Alleyne, Chris Glembocki, and Laura McClain learned to drill and split rock with feathers and wedges, allowing too-large rocks to become just-right rocks.

The Crew stopped work around 3 pm with plans to return and finish work leaving a few tasks for Sunday morning. A few hardy stalwarts hiked up the trail to see the breathtaking carpets of thousands of blooming trillium blanketing the slopes.

Dinner at chez Barber was wonderful, including Chris Glembocki's chicken chili and Kate Walker's India-inspired soup. Tysha Robinson's Thin Mint brownies were even better than last month with the addition of ice cream! The highlight of course was crew leader Dan Feer's stunning deep dish blueberry pie that was big enough to feed 20.

Sunday morning began with Kirsten Elowsky's apple pecan French toast casserole with chicken sausage (Kirsten stayed home because of her cold but she passed along the goodies to leaders Ellen and Dan Feer). Then the crew headed back out for a half-day of work on the Entry Run Tract putting finishing touches on the previous day's work.

After the cold temperatures and graupel (small soft hail) that plagued the March trip at Snickers Gap, the weather in April was perfect—warm, but not hot, breezy but not windy, sunny but not scorching. Compared to the Appalachian Trail, there were few hikers and the wildflowers and salamanders were out in force. The dogwoods, trilliums and dwarf crested irises were also blooming, proving that winter was over and PATC has beautiful trails that deserve to be hiked and appreciated.



Frisbee and relaxing at Chez Barber Friday evening. Photo credit Bill Greenan. Pictured: Eddie Becton, Robert Fina, Tysha Robinson, Martha Becton, Janet Arici



Saturday morning safety talk. Photo credit Bill Greenan. Pictured: Fred Meyer, Ellen shaw, Janet Arici, Erica Glembocki, Chris Glembocki, Laura Marschoun, Eddie Becton, Martha Becton, Robert Fina, Amanda Alleyne, Kate Walker, Ian Page ,Laura McClain, Dan Feer, JT Tucker, Steve Phillips, Tysha Robinson



Pre-work crew photo. Photo credit Tysha Robinson. Pictured: Tysha Robinson, Laura Marschoun, Dan Feer, Martha Becton, Laura McClain, Bill Greenan, Fred Meyer, Amanda Alleyne, Steve Phillips, Robert Fina, Chris Glembocki, Erica Glembocki, Eddie Becton, Kate Walker, Janet Arici, Ellen Shaw, Aidan Badhwar, Ian Page, Mark Walkup, JT Tucker, Steve E. Phillips



Erica Glembocki working on tread. Photo credit Laura McClain. Pictured: Erica Glembocki



Dan Feer and Eddie Becton moving a stone step into place. Photo credit Martha Becton.
Pictured: Eddie Becton, Dan Feer



Amanda Alleyne splitting rock with feathers and wedges with Robert Fina. Photo credit Martha Becton. Pictured: Amanda Alleyne, Robert Fina



Moving a stepping stone into place. Photo credit Ian Page. Pictured: Fred Meyer, JT Tucker, Steve E. Phillips



Ellen Shaw making crush as Aiden Badhwar supervises. Photo credit Tysha Robinson.



Steve Phillips and Laura Marschoun working to widen the narrow passage. Photo credit Tysha Robinson.



Trillium and Star Chickweed along the Quercus Trail. Photo credit Janet Arici.



Dwarf Crested Iris along the Quercus Trail. Photo Credit Martha Becton.