



Appalachian Footnotes

Delaware Valley Chapter • Appalachian Mountain Club
Summer 2019 • Volume 57 • Number 3

CLOSED

Glen Onoko Trail Closed
ID Chestnut Trees
Water Safety Course Offered
Summer Reading Group
New Leaders 2019
Meet the Ridge Runner



Appalachian Footnotes

the magazine of the
Delaware Valley Chapter
Appalachian Mountain Club
published using recycled electrons.

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They all work!

Click on the bookmark icon  you will get a clickable index!

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Members' e-mail addresses will not be used for any purpose other than sending out this bulletin.

Go to <http://amcdv.org/mail.html> to sign up, change your e-mail address or cancel your subscription

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DV Paddler's Web Site: paddlenow.com

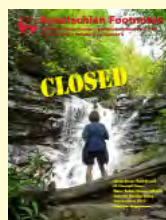
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AMC General Web Site: outdoors.org

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Questions, complaints, concerns or comments about the Delaware Valley Chapter of AMC should be directed to Chapter Ombudsman, Allen Male at ombudsman@amcdv.org.



Cover: One of the many waterfalls along the now closed Glen Onoko trail. Rich Pace photograph.

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Glen Onoko *A fabulous place to hike with a rich history. It is now closed.*

By Eric Pavlak

We used to love hiking along the 875 foot vertical drop of waterfalls that tumble down the steep and rugged gorge of Glen Onoko, but we can't do it any more.

The Glen Onoko trail, located on Pennsylvania Game Commission land, was officially closed May 1, by the Game Commission citing safety concerns. There have been several deaths on the trail and the various waterfalls. There have been numerous evacuations of the injured by local volunteer rescue crews of 20 to 30 people. The trail closure resulted in a public outcry of letters, petitions and meetings. On June 2, there was an evacuation of an injured person hiking on the closed trail.

On May 21, Gov. Tom Wolf and other state officials visited the trail. The governor proposed that the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the agency that administers state parks, should take over the trail and rebuild it to make it safer, with three intermediate access trails usable by off road vehicles for emergency evacuations. The governor tied the \$1 million plus price tag to legislative approval of his proposed tax on natural gas extraction. Pennsylvania is one of the few oil and gas producing states without such a tax.

What's the problem?

The falls trail is rugged and steep, but not all that difficult for even inexperienced hikers in good condition with decent footwear. I have personally safely led groups of city high school kids wearing sneakers up this trail. It is rocky, but seldom involves any handhold climbing.

I have also seen many out-of-shape people struggling up the trail. I seen kids and adults in flip-flops or sandals, seldom carrying water. Much worse, I have witnessed people slide and fall on slippery, wet rocks right at the lip of a waterfall.

The Glen Onoko trail is easily accessible. There is a parking area right at its base. There is a large warning sign, but few take it seriously.

Before the state built the access road to Glen Onoko in the early 1990s, getting to the trail was more difficult, involving parking on the streets of Jim Thorpe, finding a steep, poorly marked trail and crossing an abandoned railroad bridge. You seldom saw anyone else on the trail. Easy access brought large numbers venturing up the trail. Few of these knew there was a longer but easier trail to descend.

The future path

If the state goes ahead with plans to transfer the trail to DCNR, it is unlikely that it will reopen the way is, or even in a slightly improved and better maintained version. It is more likely to be



Above: One of the three major falls that are part of the 875 foot cascade of water in Glen Onoko. The gorge is located at the lower end of Lehigh Gorge State Park. — Rich Pace photo.

along the lines of George W. Childs Park trails, with graded paths, steps, handrails and fenced in viewing areas.

AMC, DV Chapter, is looking into what we can do to help. While many individuals have volunteered their services to help rebuild and reopen the trail, we have trained trail crew leaders and access to AMC's trail professionals. Long term, we may have a role in the trail redesign or ongoing maintenance.

In general, AMC supports placing appropriate fees on polluting industries to offset their negative impacts on the environment and human health and dedicating those funds to conservation and recreation purposes. However, we do not want to use Glen Onoko

Continued on next page

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as a leverage point to pass any specific tax plan.

History of the Glen

More than a century ago, the area around Glen Onoko and the town of Mauch Chunk (now renamed Jim Thorpe) was promoted as “The Switzerland of America,” and was a top scenic tourist destination, second only to Niagara Falls.

The area was originally settled (by non-native people) in 1818 when Philadelphia businessmen Josiah White, Erskine Hazard and George Hauto began work on river and canal navigation to get coal out of the region. They worked side-by-side with local roughnecks and with laborers from the streets of Philadelphia, and eventually became the founders of Mauch Chunk, a company town of the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Co.

The canal, hard to maintain and often damaged by floods, was superseded by railroads.

Advertising department name

After the Civil War, the Lehigh Valley Railroad was eager to develop the region for tourism and profitable passenger traffic. Originally known as Moore’s Ravine, the name Glen Onoko was a creation of the railroad’s advertising department. They even concocted a bogus legend of a love-lorn Indian maiden jumping to her death over the falls. (*Allentown Morning Call*, October 20, 1988.)

By the late 1880s, the Lehigh Valley Railroad and the competing New Jersey Central offered weekend excursions to Mauch Chunk from Philadelphia and New York. Glen Onoko and the Switchback Railroad were the must-see top attractions

Built in 1827 to carry coal from the town of Summit Hill down to the Lehigh River, the Switchback Railroad was the second railroad built in the country. Cars loaded with coal descended the nine miles by gravity. Empty cars were returned by mule power. It was upgraded in 1845 so that cars were returned by means of stationary steam engines and cables. A separate up track for empty cars was added at that time, so that trains could run in a continuous loop.

But almost from the start, the Switchback became a tourist railroad, and exclusively so in 1872 when a new railroad to Summit Hill and Nesquehoning provided better freight transportation. The Switchback continued as a popular tourist ride until it finally closed in 1933 during the Depression. Its works and rails were sold for scrap.

However, the old right-of-way still exists, and has become a popular trail for walking, bicycling and cross country skiing. Outfitters in Jim Thorpe rent bicycles and skis and will shuttle you to Summit Hill whether you rent from them or bring your own equipment.

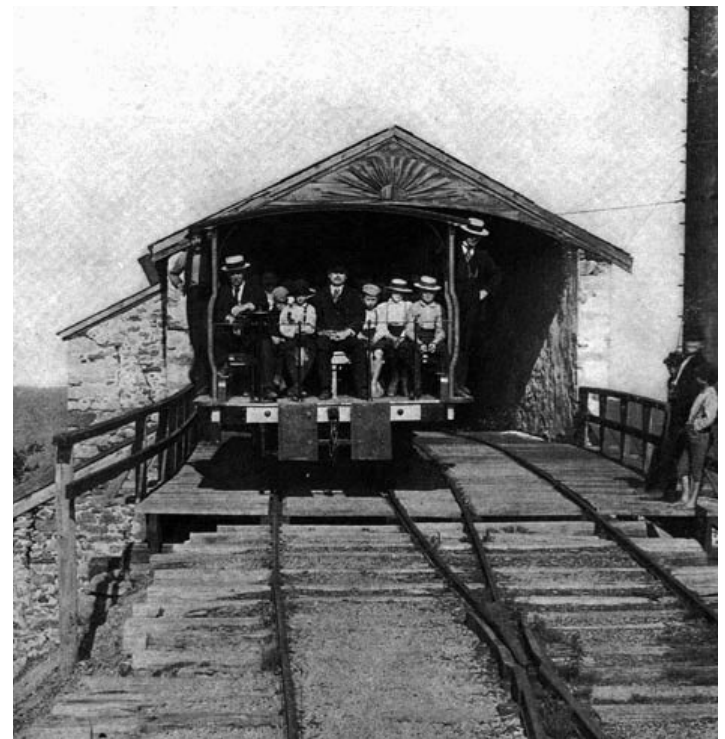
Glen Onoko was a popular location for AMC hikes. In most years, there were several scheduled on this rugged trail. The nearby Switchback Railroad trail offers a full day’s skiing or a short bike ride.

The Glen Onoko trail will likely never reopen in its present form



Above: The Wahnetah Hotel, built in 1886, stood on the banks of the Lehigh River at the entrance to the Glen. It burnt to the ground in a 1911 forest fire. The foundation and steps from the walkways are still in place. From a period hand colored photograph.

Below: The Switchback Railroad carried tourists almost from its beginning in 1827. It was closed in 1933.



How to identify the American Chestnut tree

Story and photographs by Mike Manes

There are a number of books and pamphlets available that are designed to help the reader identify the species of various trees, I will not try to compete with these references. These references usually emphasise the leaves of trees, followed by discussions of the bark, the shape of mature trees, flowers and fruits. I will give a brief description of the leaf of the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), and then describe other factors that can be used to help identify this species.

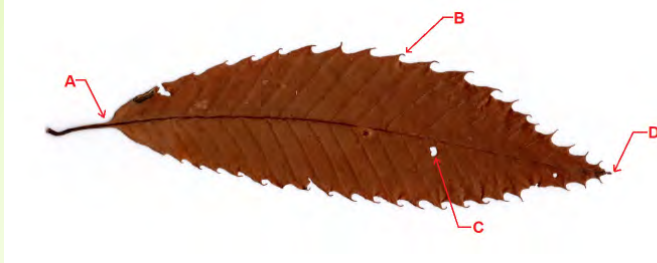


Figure 1 (above) shows a chestnut leaf, it shows most of the items that are listed below to help identify this leaf:

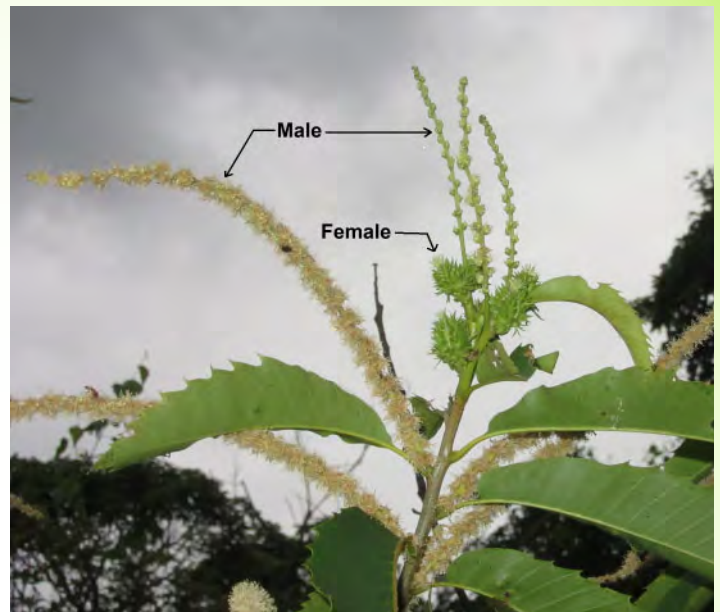
- An elongated leaf, length usually three or more times the width.
- Blade tapers sharply to meet stem at base of leaf blade. (Arrow A)
- Large, prominent teeth on edge that curve inward. (Arrow B)
- Holes eaten by insects (Arrow C). It is also a favorite food of deer and rabbits.
- Pointed tip. (Arrow D)
- Leaf is paper thin, feel it by rubbing it between your fingers.
- Leaf surface is dull, other species may have glossy topped leaves.

Other leaves that may look similar to American chestnuts include Chinese chestnuts, American beech, chestnut oak and sawtooth oak.

Figure 1 depicts a leaf that is brown, the color it is in late autumn. When leaves start to emerge in the spring, the new and undersized leaves are red, but will turn green quickly as they emerge. In October the leaves will first turn a golden yellow and then eventually become brown. October is one of the easiest times to find chestnuts, since the chestnuts hold their leaves longer than the oaks, maples or birches. In October we should be careful not to confuse the chestnuts with beeches that also hold their leaves.

Chestnuts like to grow in well drained land and prefer slightly acid soils. These trees love hill or mountain sides and tops. There are several common hiking locations in our area where the experienced student of trees will be able to spot 100 or more chestnuts in a one mile walk. This would include many sections of the Appalachian Trail, such as the area of the Pulpit and the Pinnacle in Pennsylvania or Stokes State Forest in New Jersey. Other areas with high density of chestnuts are sections of the Six Penny Trail or the Mill Creek Trail in French Creek State Park.

In the areas of high chestnut density we may observe three things. First, despite the large number of chestnuts it is almost impossible to find a tree of over two inches in diameter. Second, after making a close look at these chestnuts we will observe a number of trees with a fungal disease known as chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*), photo at the right. Third,



we may observe a dead or dying chestnut surrounded by smaller healthy looking sprouts. All three of these are part of the current chestnut life cycle. A young chestnut has smooth bark, the blight fungus cannot penetrate the bark unless it is damaged. As the tree gets older the bark develops furrows that the blight can penetrate. When the blight enters the tree it will attack the lower layer of the bark known as the cambium layer. The blight will kill the tree above the ground surface, but the roots will remain and usually re-sprout. When we are looking at forest chestnuts we are usually looking at a tree that is less than twenty years old with roots that are more than 100 years old.

While we may be able to find many chestnut trees, almost 100 percent of those we see are root sprouts, almost none were started from seeds. For trees, or most plants, the normal method of reproduction is from seeds. Since chestnuts are not reproducing in what should be their normal method they are considered “functionally extinct.” Basically we have something that the U.S. Forest Service says is “functionally extinct” and they estimate that there are 460 million of these trees in the Appalachian mountain range.

In June of 2015 I photographed a flowering American chestnut with both male and female flowers, the photo shown above. Chestnut flowers, both American and Chinese, have an aroma that most people find offensive, this can be used to help find a chestnut but cannot be used to differentiate the different species of chestnuts. Will this tree produce viable nuts that germinate and

produce a new tree? Probably it will not, several things could prevent the tree from dropping nuts and the nuts germinating. First, to get a viable nut there must be at least two flowering trees in the vicinity, a chestnut may have both male and female flowers but it cannot self pollinate. Next, the nuts are a favorite food of squirrels, other rodents, deer, blue jays, turkeys, bear and some humans. Unfortunately we do have a sad ending to this story. We returned in 2016 to the flowering tree we photographed and it was dead, killed by chestnut blight.

2019 Delaware Valley Chapter Weekend dates changed to September 13-15

The dates for the chapter weekend announced in the last issue of Footnotes have been changed from August to September 13-15.

Join fellow AMC-DV members for an activity-filled chapter weekend at Mohican Outdoor Center. There will be a variety of hikes, lake activities and evening recreation possibilities.

Stay in cabins (Blueberry or Black Oak) or camp out. For cabins, bring your own pillowcase and sheet or sleeping bag.

Prices depend on type of lodging and meals. Cabins are \$43 per night for AMC members; \$49 for nonmembers, primitive campsites are \$30 for members and \$35 for nonmembers Indian Point camping is \$35 and \$43. Executive Suite lodging \$70 and \$84.



Meals are \$12 breakfast, \$12 lunch and \$24 dinner for members; \$14, \$12 and \$29 for non-members.

A typical member's cost including meals from Friday dinner through Sunday lunch with cabin lodging would total \$182 a person. If you camped out and brought your own food, the cost would be \$60 a person.

Registration is already open! Contact AM-CLodging@outdoors.org or 603-466-2727.

Hike leaders, potential hootenanny singers and slide show presenters of beautiful places you've visited are needed for Saturday evening. Reply to: Annette Sheldon annettegabriele@verizon.net

or Geri Chmiel at jerseygbc@aol.com

Swiftwater safety course set for June 20, recommended for all paddlers

Our annual swiftwater safety session is scheduled for Saturday, July 20 at the Lambertville Wing Dam on the Delaware River, with a cost of \$5 for AMC members, and \$25 for non-members.

This safety session is for anyone who paddles, regardless of the level of difficulty or the type of boat. It is required for trip leaders, and is of great value to all paddlers. It is also very useful for hikers and backpackers who cross streams. We cover:

- Recognizing and avoiding water dangers.

- Swimming in swift water, with and without a boat and equipment.

- Self rescue in swift water.

- Assisted rescue in swift water.

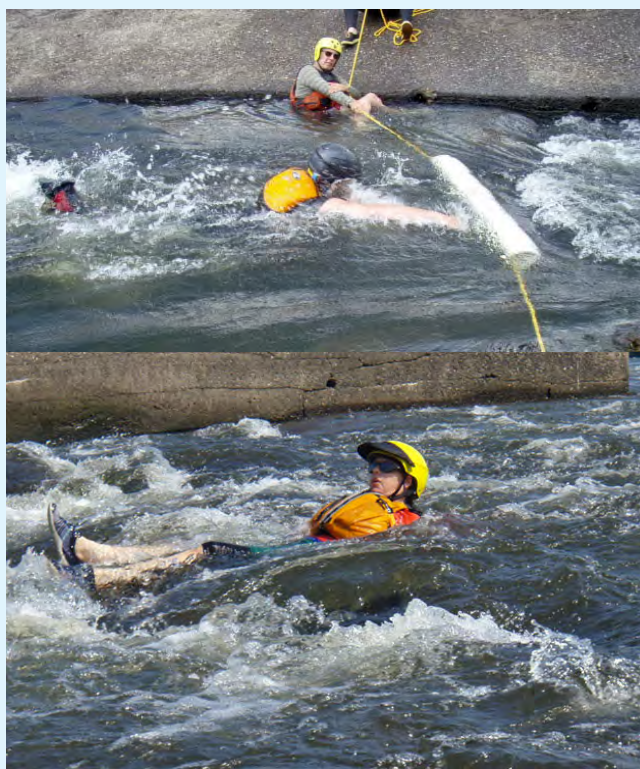
- Deep water rescue and reentry.

- Wading and stream crossings

- Managing the rescue scene.

- Selecting and using safety equipment.

For more information and registration, contact Eric Pavlak at eric@outings.org



Join Summer Outdoor Book Group

Join Kathy Kindness and friends on the third Thursday of the month from June to September. We'll discuss selected outdoor-themed books and share information about outdoor activities. Bring a friend!

All meetings are held in the community room at the Village Library of Wrightstown, 727 Penns Park Rd, Newtown, PA 18940. Check your local public library for copies of the books.

June 20 — Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail by Ben Montgomery We'll begin, appropriately, with a true story about the 67-year-old grandmother who "went out for a walk" and hiked the entire Appalachian Trail.

July 18 — The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative by Florence Williams From Amazon: "From forest trails in Korea to islands in Finland, to

eucalyptus groves in California, Florence Williams investigates the science behind nature's positive effects on the brain. Delving into brand-new research, she uncovers the powers of the natural world to improve health, promote reflection and innovation, and strengthen our relationships."

August 15 — The Eight Mountains, a Novel by Paolo Cognetti Pietro lives in Milan; the only thing he shares with his parents is their love for the Dolomites, the mountains that hug the northeastern border of Italy. While on vacation at the foot of the mountains, Pietro meets Bruno, an adventurous local boy. Together they spend many summers exploring the mountain's meadows and peaks and discover the similarities and differences in their lives, their backgrounds, and their futures. As their paths in life diverge— Bruno's in the mountains, Pietro's in cosmopolitan cities across the world— it tests the strength and meaning of their connection. — adapted from jacket.

September 19, to be determined.

Leadership training 2019 class graduates 22; five already leaders

Students

Dana Allen
Susan Allen
Rich Armington
Katie Barok
Denis Burrichter
Kyle Conrad
Maria de la Torre
Kristen Falzon
Grant Gaston
Jesse Gusler, now a hiking leader
Hong Hammarberg
David McCleary
Janet Remig
Karen Rossino, now a biking leader
Shannon Roy
Rita Schenk
Susan Schmitt, now a biking leader
Kayleen Soffer
David Varghese
Julia Watson, now a hiking leader
Ann Wolf
Sharon Wunner, now a hiking & biking leader

Volunteer trainers

Jeff Fritzing, Leadership Chair
Barbara Beatrice
Cindy Crosser
Bill DeStefano
Jeff Fritzing
Karla Geissler
Pete Jarrett
Bob Liston
Jeff Mayes
Denis McCartan
Phil Mulligan
Adrian Noble
Rich Pace
Ron Phelps
Kate Prisby
John Rogers
John Rowen
Amy Williams
Dean Witman



Meet Mathew Read, our 2019 ridge runner

Our 2019 ridge runner is Mathew Read, who spent two weeks in training and orientation for almost two weeks and began the season this Memorial Day weekend and will be on the trail through Labor Day.

Matt is from Texas and thru-hiked the trail in 2003. He brings experience, maturity and enthusiasm to the job, and we look forward to working with Matt throughout the season.

His wife Cara has accompanied him here from Texas but she will not be on the trail officially. She is able to work remotely as a writer.

The ridge runner program on the Appalachian Trail is now in its 27th year. The ridge runner is an AMC employee who works on the AT five days a week, including weekends and holidays, between Memorial and Labor Days. His or her job is to meet and greet trail users, educate on Leave No Trace, and help preserve the trail experience for future generations.

Our chapter and the larger AMC have been directly involved in supporting this program in Pennsylvania for all of those years. The program has been coordinated by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the National Park Service, with a continuing grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The section of trail covered stretches 42 miles from Delaware Water Gap to Lehigh Furnace Gap and includes Wind Gap, Little Gap and Lehigh Gap in northeastern Pennsylvania (including the 16 miles of the trail maintained by the DV Chapter). There are two other ridge runner programs on the AT in Pennsylvania, one in the Cumberland Valley, and the other in southern Pennsylvania near Michaux State Forest.

If you'd like to keep updated on the ridge runner program and Matt's experiences on the trail, check out the program on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/NEPARidgerunner/>



Hike New Jersey with the author of the latest AMC guide book

Get outdoors and hike New Jersey with the author of the new book! Upcoming hikes from *Best Day Hikes in New Jersey* include Ramapo Mountain State Forest, New Jersey Highlands, Saturday June 22,

Book signings coming to selected REI, EMS, and other stores! Check Best Day Hikes in New Jersey Facebook page to keep abreast of upcoming signings and more hikes:

www.facebook.com/Best-Day-Hikes-in-New-Jersey-2032962360330183/

You can order the book at:

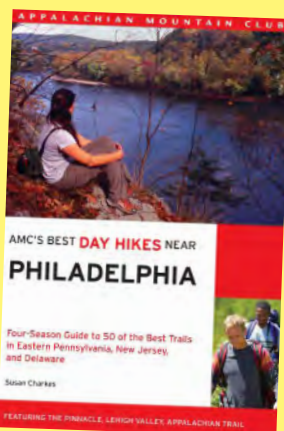
<https://amcstore.outdoors.org/books-maps/books/new-releases/>

Priscilla Estes is an avid hiker, writer and yoga instructor, and has served as DV Chapter Chair and as publicity chair.



Outdoors with Kids Philadelphia is the latest addition to the AMC's Outdoors with Kids series. Providing comprehensive guides to low-cost adventure, the book includes destination and trip information for locations in and around Philadelphia. It focuses on the "pay-off" for children of each age group while specifying which locations are good for hiking, swimming, paddling, biking, etc. It features safety tips and a "Plan B" for each destination.

Member Price: \$15.16



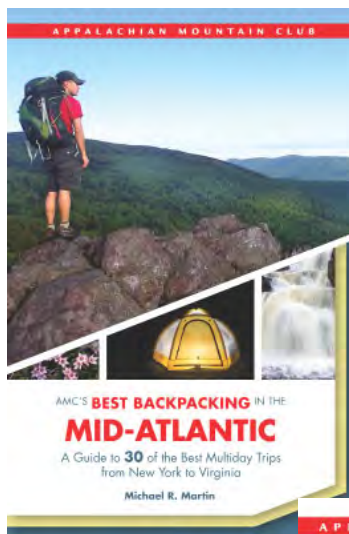
AMC's Best Day Hikes Near Philadelphia

Four-season Guide to 50 of the Best Trails in Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware

Member Price: \$15.16

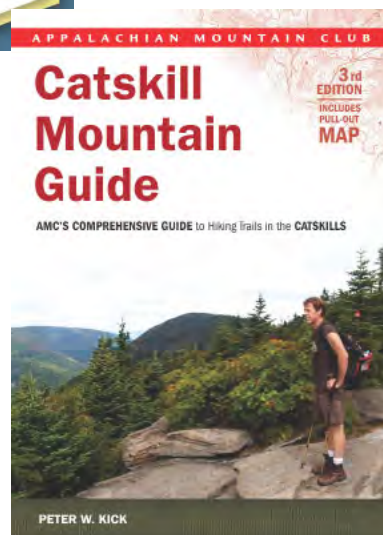
Both by Susan Charkes
Our chapter's past
Conservation Chair

Now available from AMC Books



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By Michael R. Martin
Paperback
Member Price: \$15.96

Catskill Mountain Guide: AMC's Comprehensive Guide to Hiking Trails in the Catskills, 3rd edition
By Peter W. Kick
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