


# **Appalachian Footnotes**

**Delaware Valley Chapter • Appalachian Mountain Club  
Spring 2024 • Volume 62 • Number 2**

**Lois Rothenberger earns AMC's highest award  
A banner year for trails • Trail crew leaders honored •  
Why amphibians cross roads • Spring peepers  
Fire in the NJ Pinelands • Upcoming events • Hiking quiz**

A close-up photograph of a brown tree frog (Hyla sarda) perched on a green leaf. The frog has a mottled brown and tan pattern on its back and sides, with a lighter, more uniform color on its head. Its large, prominent eyes are a deep reddish-brown. The frog is positioned in the lower half of the frame, facing right. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural habitat with many leaves.

**How big is this frog?  
Learn on page 6**



# Annual Activity Social, Gear Swap and Sale

**Sunday, April 21 Doylestown, PA**

**Enjoy a delicious catered buffet and watch the presentation of the 2023 activity and leadership awards!**

We will host our popular Gear Swap & Sale just prior to the social. It's a great opportunity for folks to swap and sell gently used outdoor gear and to find great bargains. Don't miss out!

**The Gear Swap & Sale starts at 3:30 PM. Free admission. Questions on the gear swap: [social@amcdv.org](mailto:social@amcdv.org)**

3:30-5:00 Gear Swap in pavilion behind the center

5:00-6:00 Happy Hour

6:00 - 7:00 dinner

7:00 Activity Mileage Recognition & Leader Activities Recognition.

Cost is \$15. Catered meal including appetizers and dessert. BYOB. No charge to attend only the Gear Swap.

**Register and pay at <https://amcdv.org/socialpay.html>**

Location: Central Bucks Senior Activity Center, 700 N. Shady Retreat Rd., Doylestown, PA 18901

## Leader Appreciation Picnic, optional campout, July 13 in Green Lane Park

**Free, all leaders invited! Plan to be there!**

*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader. — John Quincy Adams*

Leaders, mark your calendar for July 13 for the Leader Appreciation Picnic and optional campout in beautiful Green Lane Park, Green Lane, PA.

This special event is for leaders only! Leaders plan, guide, problem-solve, inspire. We appreciate all you do!

Details are at <https://activities.outdoors.org/search/index.cfm?action/details/id/148986>. They will also be emailed to leaders via the leader hotline later this spring. There will be a free lunch under a shady pavilion, a few interesting demo or info sessions, games and fun!

In addition we have the group campsite near the pavilion for those who would like to camp Saturday night. When you register, please specify if you will be attending the picnic, campout, or both. If you would like to lead a morning hike, bike ride or paddle before the picnic, please contact Mary Toomey at [leadership@amcdv.org](mailto:leadership@amcdv.org). Any morning activities will have a separate registration for each. We hope to see you there!

If you are an AMC-DV leader who is not yet receiving leader emails, visit <https://amcdv.org/leadership/leader-hotline>

— Mary Toomey, Leadership Chair



## Take the 2024 DelVal Bike Challenge!

**It's not difficult. Six different rides in seven months.**

You will have to do a total of six rides. At least two must be in Pennsylvania and two in New Jersey. You can substitute a ride in Delaware for one of the Pennsylvania or New Jersey rides.

One ride must be a totally new ride for you which may be done anywhere! You must be an AMC member and every ride must be led by AMC to qualify.

Download your personal tally sheet at <https://amcdv.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/bike-challenge2024tally.pdf>

The Challenge starts now and ends November 1.

Reminder: Take your bike in for a yearly tune-up at your local bike shop; especially check brakes, chain, and tires. Unless you do the work yourself.

Hope to see more of you cycling! Let's get pedaling!

— Terry Brentsen, Bicycling Chair

## Appalachian Footnotes

news from the

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# Lois Rothenberger earns Distinguished Service Award

By Peni MacMeekin

Lois Rothenberger, who served as DV Chapter chair, chapter treasurer and treasurer of the entire AMC, was presented with AMC's Distinguished Service Award at this year's Annual Summit gathering.

The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor AMC bestows upon volunteers. Established in 1976, this award recognizes AMC volunteers who have contributed outstanding efforts for a sustained period of time, with a special acknowledgement that the recipients have developed a complete understanding of the values and goals of the entire organization.

Lois has been involved with AMC in a wide variety of roles for over two decades. She embodies the ultimate AMC Volunteer: hard working, delightful to work alongside, and an equal proponent of both chapter initiatives and AMC-wide vision and goals. She threads that needle effortlessly, always with a warm smile.

Lois first volunteered as a hiking leader in the Delaware Valley Chapter in 1999. After serving as treasurer, vice chair, and chair of the Delaware Valley Chapter, Lois served simultaneously as southern regional director, AMC treasurer and August Camp registrar. Both prior to and during the pandemic, she put in an extraordinary number of hours every week, all of which she did very effectively and self-effacingly. Her willingness to utilize her skills and devote countless hours to AMC efforts has been truly exemplary.

Lois is a steady and steadying presence. In all her many positions that she has held, Lois has been and continues to be, a stellar representative of what the AMC is all about. When she says that she will do something, she follows through. She has an amazing capacity to see both the big picture and the small details and is a genuine team player, full of good ideas but always humble and goal-oriented. She upholds the AMC's mission of being an inclusive, equitable and kind community.

In the DV Chapter, Lois has successfully recruited and trained many new chapter executive committee members and encouraged people to step up to new and interesting volunteer roles. As an active leader, Lois is always very good at reaching out and welcoming new participants and helping them become acquainted with their fellow hikers. Her ability to speak enthusiastically about other activities and options within AMC has motivated many people to sample aspects of the organization that they didn't even know existed. She has been and continues to be one of AMC's best ambassadors!

For August Camp, Lois is an amazing communicator and registrar. Her tireless energy and dedication in fulfilling her duties as a registrar has translated into increased revenue for August Camp. As she handles registration forms and gets to know each camper personally, she patiently answers an untold number of questions, managing challenging situations with incredible skill, and always with a chuckle or a smile!

Lois proved to be an invaluable partner in problem solving alongside staff and on AMC's Board of Directors. Lois's term as treasurer coincided with the pandemic, which were very challenging years. She was a close partner to our teams working through to adapt and manage our organization. She blends strategic thinking and tough calls with kindness, warmth and humor. Staff can rely on her cool head and creative solutions.

Lois encourages, supports and expresses her joy in her AMC experience. With her endless energy to foster AMC's mission, Lois has devoted herself to AMC on so many levels. We love her "glass half full" mentality and her ability to serve as a role model and mentor to others. Her leadership is seen throughout the AMC, and we are inspired by her example.

Congratulations Lois!





# DV volunteer trail workers made 2023 a banner year

Trail volunteers from the Delaware Valley Chapter completed a banner year in 2023, involving more people and logging more hours and attaining more awards than ever before.

Our chapter is active in trail work from south to north and east with regular crews operating at Valley Forge National Historic Park, French Creek State Park, the Pennsylvania Highlands Trail Network in Bucks County, the Appalachian Trail in Northampton and Monroe Counties, plus in Jenny Jump State Park and on the Highlands Trail in New Jersey. In addition, our volunteers have done conservation work with The Natural Lands Trust in Pennsylvania.

A total of 559 separate volunteers contributed a whopping 136 hours in administrative work and meetings and 2,024 hours of field work! They also spent their time and money in traveling to these volunteer opportunities with 652 hours of driving!

This year also witnessed more club-wide trail work awards than ever before with both Jose Ibarra and Greg Bernet being selected to win the AMC's Volunteer Leadership Award. Trails Chair Greg Bernet also qualified for the Warren Hart Stewardship Award by logging a minimum of 224 hours, while Jose Ibarra, crew leader at Valley Forge and Dan Schwartz crew leader for the Appalachian Trail and our representative to the AT Regional Partnership Committee, both qualified for the Marian Pychowska Stewardship Award by logging a minimum of 96 hours.

The Volunteer Leadership Award was given to Jose and Greg because of their work in bringing back the AMC-DV volunteer trail crew at Valley Forge National Historic Park. Our chapter had history of doing trail work in that park for many years, but when COVID 19 hit, the entire park was closed, including trail work. Though the park re-opened to the public, they still did not allow any volunteer trail work to be done for the next three years.



*Valley Forge trail crew at work.*

It wasn't until 2023 that our volunteers were allowed to return to doing trail work at Valley Forge, thanks to the efforts of Jose and Greg. And not only have we returned to work, but we have also improved the entire operation by training a number of new trail leaders who attended our chapter's outdoor leadership training, and in addition a two day trail work training provided by AMC and a day of first aid training provided by Larry Priori at Valley Forge. This crew logged 586 hours of trail and

administrative work in 2023 pushing Jose above the 96 hour threshold for the Pychowska Award.

Dan Schwartz, long time DV member and the other Pychowska Award recipient has been a tireless worker on the Appalachian Trail for years as both the trail crew leader and as a sawyer. He also represents our club on the AT Regional Partnership Committee, attending many meetings. Our AT trail crew and corridor monitors logged 695 hours of trail and administrative work in 2023, helping Dan achieve the Pychowska Award.

DV Chapter Trails Chair Greg Bernet, also the chair of the Interchapter Trails Committee, leads the Pennsylvania Highlands Trail Stewards. They have been building new trails in Bucks County as part of the Pennsylvania Highlands Trail Network, as well as maintaining those trails and trails in the Highlands of New Jersey. These volunteers logged 664 hours of work, giving Greg the opportunity of achieving the Warren Hart Award for the third time. They will begin building another new trail this year in Bridgeton Township, Bucks County, PA near Upper Black Eddy.



*Jose Ibarra (left) and Greg Bernet*

We also have a trail crew at French Creek State Park led by Jay Gross, and they volunteered for 213 hours of work during the year. Additionally, conservation work of 24 hours was led by trail leader Mike Manes.

Our chapter's work load was increased in 2023 as the chapter agreed to take on responsibility for a section of the Appalachian Trail between Fox Gap and Delaware Water Gap, PA. This in addition to our long time responsibility for the Wind Gap to Little Gap section.

We now have to care for two shelters and privies, and Bill Steinmetz volunteered as the coordinator of the Shelter Stewards, volunteers who care for and maintain the shelters and privies. Bill has also done the work of compiling the hours that appear in this article from our volunteer hours spreadsheet which was originally developed by Dan Schwartz but which has been improved and maintained by Adrian Noble.

We have started work on building a new privy at the Kirkridge AT Shelter and expect to complete work this spring. And we have been training new volunteers as AT Corridor Monitors for this new section.

We are always looking for new volunteers to help us in our efforts, so please consider volunteering for one of our trail crews or becoming a shelter steward or corridor monitor. Visit our web page at <https://amcdv.org/volunteer/trail-work/> for more information. And give a shout out to thank our trail volunteers whenever you see them! — Greg Bernet



# Why did the Amphibian cross the road?



By David Hoke

As a kid I walked in the creek looking for snakes, frogs, crayfish, salamanders; anything I could find in the water or under rocks. So I thought I knew most of the amphibians in my area, Bucks County.

Fifty-six years later, I discovered there was much I didn't know about the amphibians that lived in my home area. I didn't know that some of them even existed. That is, until I participated in an amphibian crossing road event.

I had heard the calls of spring peepers but had never seen one. They are very small frogs, about the size of a quarter. I did not know about wood frogs.

The best thing I saw that first night was the spotted mole salamander. They are big compared to the salamanders I knew, about five to six inches in length. That was really cool to see!

I learned about the mole salamander, one you hardly ever see because it lives underground. The only time you can see one is when they come out to reproduce. They emerge early in the year, when the temperature is above 40 degrees, when it's raining and at night. We were watching this past February 27.

When the conditions are right, amphibians end their hibernation and seek a vernal pond, one that dries up during the summer. That way the pond has very few predators, mainly fish.

Sometimes they have to cross a road to get to their destination. The Heritage Conservatory has two places that they monitor in Bucks County. One in the Quakertown swamp area, the headwaters of the Tohickon Creek, and one is in Buckingham township not far from the intersection of Route 263 (York Road) and Route 413, This is where I was.

We only had to patrol the road from dusk until 11 or 12 PM because not many cars are on the road after midnight. We tried not to pick them up and move them. We just let them make it across the road on their own. But sometimes there are cars coming, so we do pick them up.

The first night I didn't have gloves, but I did wet my hands before handling them. You really don't want to use your bare hands because amphibians breathe through their skin and the oils on your hands can mess them up.

The second night out I had nitrile gloves. Vinyl gloves are also OK, but not latex. In addition to helping them cross the road we counted how many make it and how many get killed. Even though we were there, some did get crushed.

We also tried to document the species, but sometimes it's hard to tell what they are. Some of the frogs had markings of a pickerel on their legs but not the full body marking, so it wasn't clear if it was a green frog or a pickerel frog. I found out they were both wood frogs.

That first night the frogs started their mating calls. I did recognize the spring peeper calls, but heard one call new to me. It is hard to describe, but something like a machine shop or mechanical sound. I think it was the wood frog's call.

That first night we reported a total of 15 salamanders and 65 frogs —peepers and wood frogs. We logged 10 dead frogs and two dead salamanders. Two nights later we reported two spotted mole salamanders, one redback salamander, 20 peepers and 14 wood frogs; plus one dead spotted mole salamander, and six dead frogs.

Why do amphibians cross the road? To reproduce.



Dave Hoke, amphibian crossing guard

**More on the next page**





**Amphibians cross roads:** Not all make it, but with help, enough do.



## Spring Peepers

Walk near almost any wetland in early spring, and you will likely hear a chorus of frogs peeping—often screaming. They are spring peepers, *Pseudacris crucifer*, native to most of eastern North America from northern Florida to Hudson Bay, west past the great lakes and the Mississippi River.

Spring peepers are very small tree frogs. They are generally about one inch. 2.5 centimeters, in length, and their weight averages from 0.11 to 0.18 ounces, about 3 to 5 grams.

Their bodies have smooth skin in shades of tan, brown, green, or gray, with lines that form an X-shaped pattern on their backs. Hence the species name *crucifer*.

Their bellies are white to cream-colored, and they have dark bands on their legs and a dark line between their eyes. Spring peepers are well camouflaged to look like tree bark and have some ability to make themselves lighter or darker in order to better match their surroundings. The flat, terminal pad on each of the amphibian's toes allow it to grip onto plants, while its webbed hind feet give it support. Although they are good climbers, they spend most of their time on the ground, often hiding under leaf litter during the day. Spring peepers are rarely seen, but during mating season in the spring, they are often heard.

Snakes, salamanders, large carnivorous insects and birds prey on adult spring peepers. Their tadpoles are eaten by aquatic invertebrates and salamander larvae.

They generally eat beetles, ants, flies, and spiders. Tadpoles feed on algae and microorganisms.

Spring peepers are known for the males' mating call—a high-pitched whistling or peeping sound repeated about 20 times a minute. However, the faster and louder they sing, the greater the chances of attracting a mate. They often congregate near water and sing in trios, with the deepest-voiced frog starting the call. They begin breeding early in the spring and call on warm spring nights and during the day in rainy or cloudy weather.

Females lay their eggs in vernal pools, ponds, and other wetlands where fish are not present. A female may lay anywhere from 750 to 1,200 eggs, which attach to submerged aquatic vegetation. Males fertilize the eggs as they are laid.

Depending on the temperature, eggs can hatch within two days to two weeks. The tadpoles have gills to breathe underwater and tails to help them swim. Tadpoles transform into frogs over the course of 6 to 12 weeks. Spring peepers are thought to live three to four years at most.

Source: *National Wildlife Federation and others.*



Norman Walsh photo



# Fire in the Pinelands

By Richard Puglisi

These days when hiking on trails in the New Jersey Pinelands, also known as the Pine Barrens, blackened charred trees seem to be an all too familiar sight. As of mid-September 2023, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service had responded state-wide to 1,034 wildfires which had burned 17,979 acres. On average 1,500 wildfires damage or destroy 7,000 acres of New Jersey's forests each year. Therefore, 2023 was one of the busiest years for fires in more than a decade.

The fire season in the Pinelands started in April 2023 with the fire at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in Manchester, resulting in six square miles burned and the evacuation of around 170 homes. This was followed in June by the massive fire at Bass River State Forest in which over 5,000 acres were burned. The resulting smoke was so bad that it caused the closure of a stretch of the Garden State Parkway during a Friday rush hour. And in addition, six homes along with the Timberline Campground were threatened by flames and had to be evacuated, and if that wasn't bad enough parts of the Batona Trail sustained severe damage requiring major maintenance.

As the summer continued, in June a fire broke out at Brendan Byrne State Forest in Browns Mills resulting in 50-acres burned and two structures threatened. And in August, there was a fire at Wharton State Forest in Waterford Township that started near the old Atco Dragway and burned over 1,500 acres.

While the true cause of these fires may not be known, dry conditions were a contributing factor and in most cases they were further exacerbated by strong winds. In an effort to mitigate the risk of wildfires, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service performs prescribed burns every year during the months of February through April. These burns reduce the materials that fuel wildfires by burning the buildup of undergrowth, leaves, branches, and pine needles on forest floors. The goal of the Forest Fire Service is to prescribe burn about 25,000 acres of forest each year.

It is amazing how the Pinelands recovers after a fire. The pitch pines have thick bark that usually protects them from serious damage and in just over a month green sprouts poke out of half-blackened trees. They also have serotinous cones, which means they remain closed until exposed to high heat from fire, at which point they release their seeds. Shrub oaks in the Pinelands are also well adapted to wildfires. They have large, thick, tuberous root systems that ensure their survival and within months, they and the blackjack oaks send out healthy new shoots.

According to the New Jersey Forest Fire Service, 99 percent of wildfires are caused by people, through accidents, carelessness, and arson with the remainder caused by lightning strikes. In order to assist in future firefighting efforts, Governor Phil Murphy in September 2023, boosted the Forest Fire Service budget by \$3 million in order to hire more firefighters and upgrade fire fighting equipment.

Finally, climate change has greatly contributed to the increase in wildfires due to warmer springs and longer drier summers. Multiple studies have found that it has led to an increase in the wildfire season length with fires now occurring in February and early March. Also, the nonprofit Climate Central did an analysis of weather conditions during the past 50 years and found that the annual number of days with a high risk for wildfire has increased by four days in southern New Jersey.

The New Jersey Pinelands are mostly protected as part of the Pinelands National Reserve. This is a beautiful and unique ecosystem that needs to be preserved. In order to reduce the risk of wildfires and protect life and property within the reserve, we obviously need to be careful with fire and continue in our efforts to reduce carbon emissions and fossil fuel use.





## Hiking Quiz

**There is more to hiking than walking through your surroundings and not paying attention to what you see and hear.**

**Left: This city hike was led by Lisa Kleiman. What was the subject of the hike?**

**Below: This is the second largest tree in Valley Forge National Historic Park. It took six AMC hikers with outstretched arms to encircle it. What kind of tree is it and where exactly is located?**

**Below left: What is this thorn-studded tree?**

Answers in the Weekly Bulletin in mid-April.  
If you do not get the free Weekly Bulletin,  
click this link: <https://amcdv.org/mail.html>

