

June 2016 Mountain Trips

MAC & Potomac Valley Chapter ARS

(Tentative Plans as of 5/25/2016)

George McLellan
Don Hyatt: don@donaldhyatt.com

With the late freezes and heavy rains, the weather has certainly damaged many spring garden displays. It must have affected the native azaleas and rhododendrons in the mountains but we have no idea what to expect. The following itinerary is our best bet for what hope to see and when that will be. Feel free to join us on all or part of our trip, but keep in touch as we may change locations and our focus on the trip depending upon the weather conditions and what seems to be in flower.

1. Mount Rogers and Grayson Highlands

Saturday, June 11

Drive to Grayson Highlands State Park to admire *R. calendulaceum*. If there is time, take moderate hike out to Rhododendron Gap to see the *R. catawbiense* display.

Hotel - Probably the Econo Lodge in Marion, 1420 N Main St, Marion, VA 24354 Phone:(276) 783-603)

- 6/11 – Explore Grayson Highlands State Park for much of the day and head to Maropn, VA, for the evening.
- 6/12 – Check out Black Mountain in southwest Virginia and eastern Kentucky. Head to either Mountain City or Elizabethton, TN for the evening.

2. Roan Mountain and the Appalachian Trail

Sunday through Tuesday, June 12 - 14

This is probably the most scenic hike on our trip, so we want to hike the Roan Highlands on the day that promises to have the best weather. It can be an easy to moderate hike depending on how far one goes. The majestic views with *R. calendulaceum* and *R. catawbiense* are superb. NASCAR has scheduled big racing weekends in Bristol for 6/17 – 6/19 and 6/23-6/26 which usually swamps all area hotels so most people avoid those dates. The Southern Appalachians Highlands Conservancy has shifted their annual June Jamboree back to 6/11. They do arrange hikes in the Roan Mountain area that weekend so some people might prefer to join up with them. (<http://www.appalachian.org>)

Americourt Hotel Mountain City (preferred)
450 Dotson Lane, Mountain City, TN 37683
Phone: (423) 727-7311

or

Americourt Hotel Elizabethton (overflow)
1515 19E Bypass, Elizabethton, TN 37643
Phone: (423) 542-4466



R. calendulaceum at Grayson Highlands



“Grayson’s Gold” Close Up



R. calendulaceum at Engine Gap



R. catawbiense and Grassy Ridge Point

- 6/12 – If time allows, consider a quick trip to Roan Mt. or Snake Mt. in late afternoon. Possibly visit J. Jackson & Lindy Johnson but call first
- 6/13 – Spend the day on Roan Mt., weather permitting. Pack lunch.
- 6/14 – Alternative hike date for Roan. Second option is to get on Parkway at Boon and see Linville Falls and other spots on the upper Parkway. Stop by Mount Mitchell if weather is clear. Possibly visit Red Max. Return to the hotel for the evening.

3. Lower Blue Ridge Parkway to Wayah Bald *Wednesday, June 15*

This lower section is one of the prettiest sections of the entire Blue Ridge Parkway, so we will spend much of our travel time enjoying vistas, native azaleas, rhododendrons, and wildflowers.

Microtel Inn Franklin
81 Allman Dr, Franklin, NC 28734
Phone: (828) 349-9000

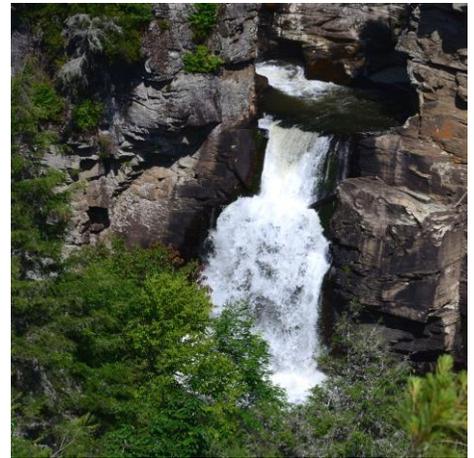
- 6/15 – Leave early in the morning and travel south to I-26 to Asheville. Get on the Blue Ridge Parkway heading south and end up in Franklin by the evening.
- 6/16 – Drive to Wayah and Wine Spring Bald in the AM. Admire the fragrant *R. arborescens* on the bald and look for *R. calendulaceum* forms on the mountain. There are some excellent forms of *Kalmia* on Wine Spring Bald, too. Drive to Robbinsville, NC, for the evening.

4. Hooper Bald and the Restoration Project *Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 16 - 18*

This is an easy hike to see *R. calendulaceum* and the Hooper Bald renovation project. We hope to spend one day doing some clearing but there are possible side trips to other locations.

Microtel Inn, Robbinsville, NC
111 Rodney Orr Bypass, Robbinsville, NC
Phone: (828) 479-6772

- 6/16 – Check into the Microtel Inn and go to Hooper Bald in the evening if there is time.
- 6/17 – Spend the day on Hooper Bald. Trim brush, cut back weeds, and admire azaleas, trying to better document forms. Across the road, take the trail to Oak Knob to check the larger azalea planting. If there is time, consider hiking out to Huckleberry Knob to appreciate the vistas.
- 6/18 – Explore for *R. cumberlandense* along the Cherohala Skyway, check out waterfalls, or head south past Murphy to investigate places like Slaughter or Blood Mountain.



Vista from the Linville Falls Trail



R. arborescens at Wayah Bald



“2nd Best Red” on Hooper Bald



“Best Red” on Hooper Bald

5. Gregory Bald & the Smokies

Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, June 19 - 21

This is a strenuous hike to see native azaleas on top of Gregory Bald. Trip takes 3 or more hours each way, unless you are old and fat. Then allow 4 to 5 hours each way. We want to hike when weather conditions are not threatening so we will choose the most promising day for the long hike. There are alternative short hikes and places to visit on the other days.

Best Western Cades Cove Inn

7824 E Lamar Alexander Pkwy, Townsend, TN 37882

Phone: (865) 448-9000

- 6/19 – Buy food for hike and breakfast. Get to bed early in preparation for Gregory Hike.
- 6/20 – Hike Gregory Bald, weather permitting. Very early rise... Leave motel at 6:00 AM!
- 6/21 – Alternative date for Gregory hike. If hike was successful on Monday, we can visit other places in Smokies, such as the Jump Off or even Mount LeConte to see “Smokianum.” That assumes that people can still walk since the Gregory trip is usually quite taxing.

6. On Your Own

Wednesday & Thursday, June 22 -23:

- 6/22 Head for home, tour the Parkway admiring Kalmia or looking for *R. maximum* forms. Visit nurseries to buy plants to take back to the garden. Possibly spend the night in Mountain City and dine at Suba’s Restaurant. Home on 6/23

Americourt Hotel Mountain City

450 Dotson Lane, Mountain City, TN 37683

Phone: (423) 727-7311

East Fork Nursery – Vivian Abney (native azaleas, etc.)

2769 Bethel Church Road, Sevierville, TN 37876

Phone: (865) 453-6108



Heading for home after making the nursery stops



Gregory Bald Vista



Multicolored Gregory Bald Hybrid



“Smokianum” growing in a rocky cliff



Kalmia along the Blue Ridge Parkway