



# THE GAZETTE

*Inspire, educate and promote fellowship among long-distance hikers and those who support long-distance hiking.*



*Photo courtesy of Amanda Stewart*

## IN THIS ISSUE

### PRESIDENT'S NOTE

### LESSONS OF LONG DISTANCE HIKING AND MEDITATION

### BEAR ATTACKS DO HAPPEN

### UPDATES ON LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

### SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: TRIPLE CROWN COFFEE

### TRIP REPORT: THE OUACHITA TRAIL

### BOOK NOOK

## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Hey Hikers! Cephas here, wishing you all the best and hoping your hiking season has been the best you could make of it during this time of unrest.

While my own hiking plans had to be shelved for a later date, I have been able to get out on a regular basis and visit some of my local trails. I've also been able to hike some trails in Arkansas while caring for my grandchildren. During these day hikes, I've seen the number of trail users increase. This increase in traffic – hikers, bikers, and runners – has brought with it an increase in trash and damage.

I considered that I might be “preaching to the choir,” however I would still like to encourage you to visit the [Leave No Trace website](#). As a member of ALDHA-West and the hiking community at large, I hope you will consider our mission statement – to educate and inspire. There are lots of entertaining and educational resources available that may be of interest either to yourself or to share with your friends and family. Sharing fun and informative articles like “[Confessions](#)

of a First Time Cat Hole Digger,” by Julia Oleksiak, are great ways to share knowledge and best practices.

As our various events were cancelled, the Board stepped up and delivered some great online events this summer including the webinar “Thru-Hiking While Black.” This excellent conversation with Chardonnay and Akuna is available to watch on our website.

Let me leave you with a brief note of what to expect in the coming weeks/months to follow. Unfortunately, I can’t give you any definite information on future live events, only that we are looking forward to resuming them as well.

Brandon “Pajamas” Lampley will continue as our Event Coordinator through 2021. PJ is a skilled and dedicated individual who worked hard to help pull off our 2020 Rucks. We are looking forward to working with him again during the coming year.

On October 17 we will be holding the Triple Crown of Hiking Awards ceremony online. Details regarding time and how to access the event will be forthcoming. There is a large TC class this year, so it should be a blast!

Nominations for the offices of Vice-President, Treasurer, and three Board Members at Large will be closing on September 15th. Go to [aldhawest.org/boardnominations](https://aldhawest.org/boardnominations) to nominate a friend (or yourself!) for one of these coveted positions. The election will be done electronically rather than in-person this year. Keep an eye out for an email with the candidates’ information and the link to access the ballot. Your votes are important to us!



*Never too young to learn LNT principles*

**THRU-HIKING WHILE BLACK**

A CONVERSATION WITH  
TRIPLE CROWNERS  
ELSYE "CHARDONNAY" WALKER  
& WILL "AKUNA" ROBINSON

**WEBINAR**  
**THURS, JULY 16**  
**4PM PST**

#THRUHIKINGWHILEBLACK  
#THRUTHISTOGETHER

The weeks and months ahead will be full of activity. Please keep an eye out for organizational emails which will have events and schedules listed. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to go to the website and click on the “Contact” tab to easily reach us.

May you find peace in every footstep,  
Charles “Cephas” Baker

# LESSONS OF LONG-DISTANCE HIKING AND MEDITATION

by Anne "Kimchi" Hildebrand

After three long-distance hikes and three silent vipassana meditation retreats, I may have finally cobbled together a couple nuggets of wisdom to stow in my fanny pack for later consumption. While I have listened to whispering pines in gale-force winds and I have noticed decreasingly tiny intervals between the tempestuous storms of inner monologue between my ears it's really beside the point. Here are a few mundane, but real, convergent lessons from long-distance hiking and vipassana meditation.

## There Is Always Something

No matter what you are doing, there will always be SOMETHING that isn't quite right. You might be hiking through Wyoming's Great Divide Basin thinking, "Goddamn this desert. There's no water here. Water is so heavy. I hate water. But I am so thirsty. I love water. Water is delicious. But DAMN it's heavy. I hate this desert. If only I were in a moister area..."

...but then you'll be in New Zealand thinking, "Ankle deep mud for DAYS? Why did I sign up for this? There is water everywhere! DEAR GOD, WHY IS THERE WATER EVERYWHERE???"



Similarly, while meditating you might realize that despite two solid hours of strong practice, your mind is all over the place. Worse, it's stuck in one place over and over, replaying potential comebacks that you will use against some acquaintance someday. Over. And over. And over. "If only I could let this one thing go, then I would be a super meditator! But this one thing is so important to think about..."

Our minds love to focus on that which is less than perfect. There will always be something that isn't quite right, that is less than ideal. When you notice yourself focusing on the negative give yourself a small nudge and shift your focus to something that's okay and accept that the mind is a mad place.

## Thoughts and Reactions Change Based On Emotions

Very rarely can you predict your future decisions based on present emotions, especially if those emotions are intense. How many times did I decide to quit the PCT? Countless. But in the back country you can't just put your things in a box and walk out to your car and drive away. Oh no. You could sit down on your ass and cry, but the mountains don't care and you won't get any quitting done that way. You have to walk to town and – shocker – that can take days. By the time you've reached town and eaten a burger, you can't wait to hit the trail again.

While meditating I very often feel frustration or anger or annoyance or sadness. One second I'll make a decision about what to say to some person who pissed me off. Then I'll decide I should say something compassionate. And then I decide to say something dispassionate.

I'm so sure about each of these decisions in the moment and if I'd had a chance I absolutely would have acted on them. However after days of focus it becomes obvious that it isn't even worth the mental effort to say anything at all.

Take the time to feel through all your emotions before coming to a decision. A wise hiker once said: "Never quit on a bad day. Only quit on a good day. Then you know you really want to quit."

### Practice. Practice. Practice.

Growing up, I literally had a doctor's note that said that I couldn't walk long distances or sit cross-legged. I have a Sacralized L5 Vertebra which has caused me lots of pain. Strangely I decided one day that I wanted to walk across the country. I endured INSANE amounts of daily pain but I kept going. I learned that the human body is an amazing thing. The human body will adapt, especially if you do the same thing all day every day, day after day after day. Combined with some wisdom and improved gear systems, I managed to hike with much less pain. My mantra was basically "Don't complain. Suck it up and be a badass."

When I first sat in meditation I had my story all ready in my head: "I can't sit cross-legged.

I have a biological reason why that hurts so bad." It's true and I do but I allowed that story to work as an excuse. For two years I meditated in a comfortable position, all the while feeling justified in my special case as to why I didn't have to suffer like the rest. I was meditating after all, right? And wasn't that the point? Well on my second retreat, I realized that by not

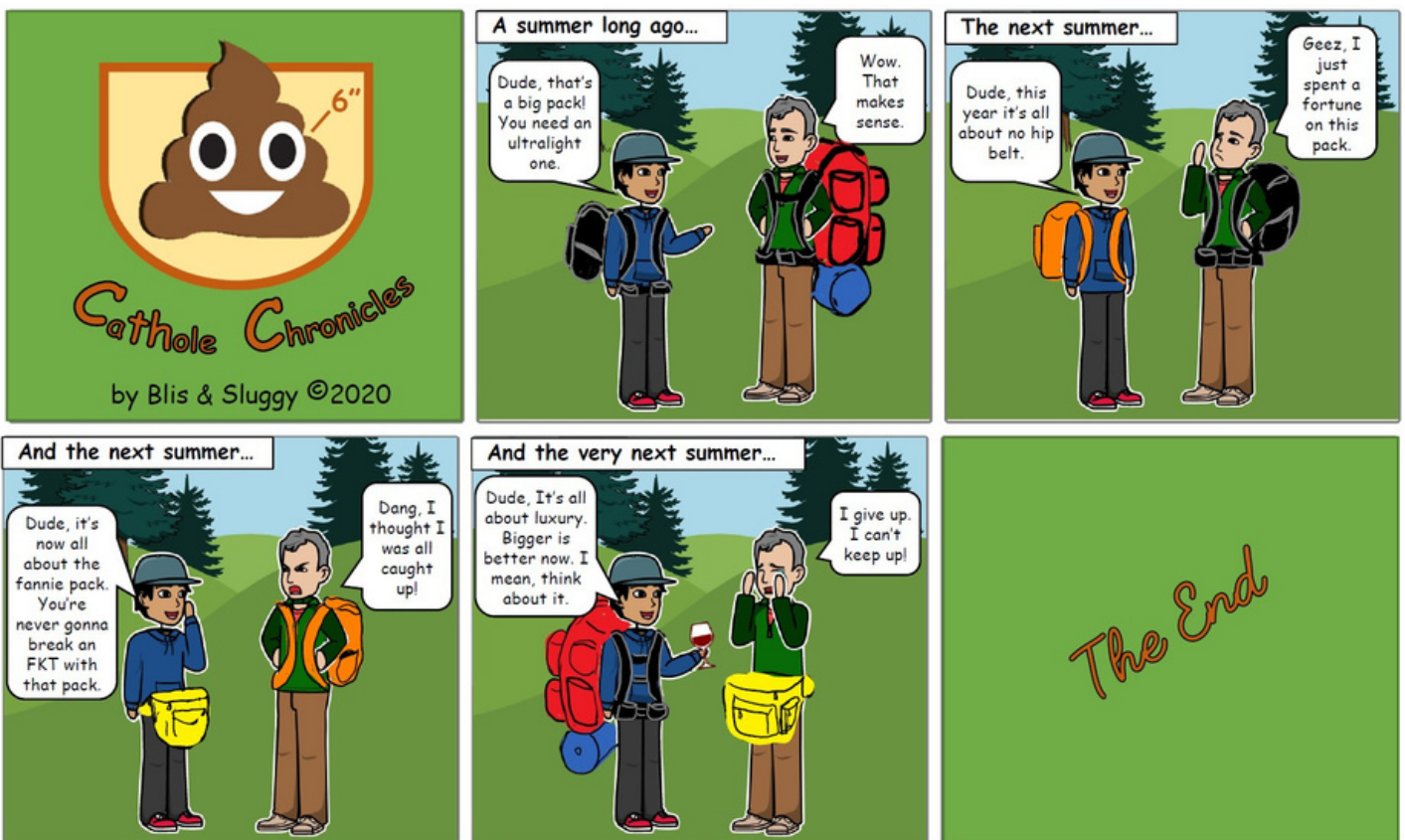


challenging my level of discomfort, I was robbing myself of the chance to develop my equanimity in the face of negativity on the bodily level. So I told myself to suck it up and be a badass.

As I went to group sittings, I would sit cross-legged for the full hour. The first 30 minutes were OK. The next 15 hurt, but I viewed the pain as an unbiased observer. The last 15 minutes were pure torture. The only thing I was doing was spending all of my mental energy in hating the pain, craving for it to be over and relying on my iron will to not move until the end of the hour. This is not meditating.

On my last retreat, on the evening of Day 7 (after 70 hours of full-on practice before I even made this one tiny realization), I was sitting and suffering and gritting my teeth when I realized: "I have no equanimity. The goal is to develop equanimity. The goal isn't to remain motionless and iron-willed. These things are just tools. A wise person will know when they have stopped working and started going mad and will stop the madness." So I moved.

Practice doesn't mean putting yourself through super painful things, it means allowing yourself to observe your discomfort and being wise enough to shift when things truly become too painful or too challenging.



# BEAR ATTACKS DO HAPPEN

by Kevin "Larry Boy" DeVries



"But what about bears?" the tourist asks. Sigh. Not the Bear Conversation again. All long-distance hikers know that the public's "bearanoia" is vastly overblown. Perhaps we even slip into complacency. I hiked more than 10,000 lifetime miles before I even saw my first bear. But on July 21, 2020, I was attacked by a grizzly bear on a long-distance route in the Yellowstone area.

By bear-attack standards, the details aren't particularly remarkable. As I followed a game trail through some cliff bands, I paused between verses of the song I was singing, trying to remember the lyrics. I came around a corner and a startled grizzly was 7-8 feet away, already charging. There was no time to use my bear spray. He swiped at me, spun me around, and charged again. Somehow my trekking pole connected with his eye as he knocked me down. I rolled under a small pine tree and played dead, covering the back of my neck with one hand while drawing my bear spray with the other. But by that time he had huffed over me once or twice and took off, audibly whimpering presumably from his eye injury.

I laid there for ten minutes to make sure he was gone and took stock. The deep gashes on my chest needed sanitation and stitching. I got up, hiked out of the immediate area and field-dressed my wounds using toilet paper, athletic tape, and most of a tube of Neosporin. I checked my overview maps and identified a trailhead about fifteen miles down a well-trod horse trail. Cell coverage maps revealed that I would have service to call 911. I hiked out to the road, meeting a day hiker who agreed to drive me an hour to the hospital. Five hours, a million tests, and many stitches later, I was discharged, grateful to God to be alive.



Here's what I think we can take away from this:

**Have the right equipment.**

Do you bring bear spray when hiking in grizzly country? Do you assiduously bear bag when in grizzly territory, habituated black bear territory, or where required by regulation? Have you considered a personal locator beacon, depending on the area's remoteness? Bear spray didn't prevent the initial attack, but likely would have spared me further injury had he not backed off.

**Have the right information.**

Good information is often even more than equipment. Do you have multiple map sources in case your phone gets lost, wet, or breaks? Have you downloaded a wide corridor of maps to your phone in case of bailout? Do you carry regional overview maps? Do you know how to recognize a bear encounter as predatory or defensive, and what to do in each situation? Do you know what to do in a grizzly or black bear attack?

**Practice**

Just imagine how much more competent we would be if we obsessed over our skill sets like we do over our gear lists. Have you practiced unholstering your bear spray, removing the safety, and aiming in one smooth, quick motion? Have you visualized playing dead in the event of a defensive bear attack? When confronted with stressful situations, our reactions must be instantaneous, correct, and automatic. There's no time to stop and think when a grizzly is charging or a storm breaks overhead.

We don't need to be scared of bear attacks. They're exceptionally unlikely, even for those who spend vast amounts of time in bear territory. But preparation weighs nothing and provides peace of mind for both hikers and loved ones. And someday, it might save your life. I know it saved mine.

**Bear Inflicted Injuries in Yellowstone National Park**

Since 1979, Yellowstone has hosted over 118 million visits. During this time, 44 people were injured by grizzly bears in the park. For all park visitors combined, the chances of being injured by a grizzly bear are approximately 1 in 2.7 million visits. The risk is significantly lower for people who don't leave developed areas or roadsides, and higher for anyone hiking in the backcountry.

Grizzly bear-inflicted injuries to humans in developed areas averaged approximately one per year during the 1930s through the 1950s, and four per year during the 1960s. Grizzly bear-caused human injuries in developed areas then decreased to one injury every two years (0.5/year) during the 1970s. Since 1980, there have been only two (0.1/year) grizzly bear-caused human injuries in developed areas, an average of approximately one every 20 years. Over the same time span, there have been 34 human injuries caused by grizzly bears in the backcountry: an average of one per year.

Source: [nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/injuries.htm](https://nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/injuries.htm) (Updated September 2019)

# UPDATES ON LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

By Mary "Fireweed" Kwart

## Congress Passes the "Great American Outdoors Act" (GAOA)



Photo: Tasos Katopodis/Getty Images

This legislation, billed by some as “The biggest land conservation legislation in a generation,” will provide up to \$9 billion over the next five years to fix deferred maintenance at national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and other federal lands. This money will help address the highest-priority infrastructure repair needs, including visitor centers, trails, roads, bridges, water and electrical systems, and more. It was championed by both Democrats and Republicans who decided that protecting federal land assets is instrumental in maintaining local community economies. President Trump signed it into law on August 4.

The GAOA also guarantees \$900 million per year in perpetuity for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a flagship conservation program paid for by royalty payments from offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters. The LWCF was established in 1964 with an authorization level of \$900 million, but in most years Congress has appropriated less than half of this amount.

Agencies such as the National Park Service have used funds from the LWCF to purchase vulnerable lands within park borders from willing sellers, protecting these parcels from incompatible residential and commercial development

## Plans Dropped for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP)

Duke Energy and Dominion Energy announced they are dropping plans to build the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, a surprise win for the long distance hiking community as well as Indigenous and African-American activists. The 600-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline would have carried fracked gas from West Virginia to North Carolina crossing beneath the historic Appalachian Trail. It would have also run through Union Hill, Virginia, an historically Black community founded by freed slaves after the Civil War, and Robeson County, North Carolina, home to the Lumbee Tribe. The massive utility companies said lawsuits had increased costs for the pipeline by at least \$3 billion. This fact combined with ongoing delays and potential future legal battles were cited as reasons for canceling the project.

# SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: TRIPLE CROWN COFFEE

Text and photos courtesy of Chris "Cookie Monster" Pirrello

Triple Crown Coffee produces all organic, single source coffee roasted to perfection. Each distinct roast is named after a triple crown trail. Our world class coffee is sold whole bean by the pound or packaged in our Backcountry Bean Bags, specifically designed for use on trail. Backcountry Bean Bags deliver a proper cup of coffee in a clean, convenient, and compostable package. No more having to wait till town for a great cup of coffee!



Proceeds from the sale of each roast are donated to the non profit organizations that oversee the trails. Triple Crown Coffee is proud to donate a portion of sales to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, The Pacific Crest Trail Association, and the Continental Divide Coalition. Find our coffee at [www.triplecrowncoffee.com](http://www.triplecrowncoffee.com).

Support the trails you love, one cup at a time.



## CONTRIBUTE TO THE GAZETTE

The Gazette is seeking contributions from members like you!  
We want to feature all things hiking:

Photos

Trip Reports

Recipes

Calls to Action

Art

Comics

Trail tips

Gear Reviews

Submit your contributions to The Gazette editor,  
Lisa "Hummingbird" Pulsifer - [l.pulsifer@aldhawest.org](mailto:l.pulsifer@aldhawest.org)

# TRIP REPORT: THE OUACHITA TRAIL

By Naomi "The Punisher" Hudetz



Looking for a shoulder-season thru hike? It seems like a lifetime ago, but my husband and I were lucky and got one last thru hike in before COVID-19 hit. On February 26th, we started the Ouachita Trail (OT), which runs 192 miles across the lands of the Kiikaapoi, Caddo, and Waxhazhe Manzhaz (far eastern Oklahoma to Little Rock, Arkansas.) I didn't know what to expect, as I'd never hiked in this part of the country before, but I had a fantastic experience

The OT was good, well-maintained trail the entire way. The first western quarter of the trail was pretty rocky, however, which slowed us down slightly. The climbs were well-graded and the trail was well marked with blue blazes (think AT style). Water wasn't an issue for us however some sources dry up later in the season.



For the most part we had the trail to ourselves. The OT had a true feeling of isolation. We really got the sense of being outside of civilization, with no major towns along the way. Around two-thirds of the OT is open to mountain bikes, but we never saw one. We saw only two other thru hikers on the entire trail – one on the second day and one on the second-to-last day. As we were hiking down the trail, we saw a hiker coming towards us and he called out, "Naomi?" I was shocked to hear my name called out in the middle of nowhere! It was Larry Boy – a hiker I'd met at the Gathering just a few months before. We spent time catching up and talking trail – a highlight of the trip.

There aren't any significant towns along the trail, which means resupply can be tricky. We had one resupply—we sent a box to the Blue Bird Café in Story, Arkansas. The owner of the café was incredibly hiker-friendly. After feeding us, she drove us into a bigger town where we could do laundry and supplement our box. She even called a motel and reserved us a room (there was no cell phone coverage in Story.)

If there was an award for the Cleanest Shelters Ever, I'd nominate the OT shelters. Maybe it's because we were some of the first hikers of the season, but both inside and out, the shelters were immaculate.



Check the weather before you go—we had really cold temps (low 20s) the first 2 days. Our shuttle driver also warned us that there is the potential for ice storms at that time of year. After the temps warmed up, we had some serious rain in the forecast but it never materialized.

We were a little surprised that we saw both ticks and chiggers so early in the season. Another reason to hike the OT in spring or fall—I would imagine that they would be intolerable during the summer.

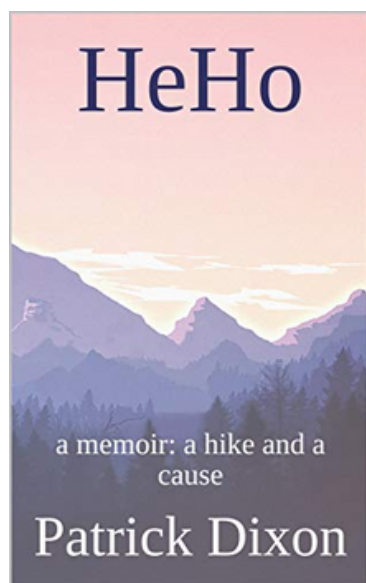
Bonus miles! From the eastern terminus, you can continue hiking on an urban trail all the way to Little Rock.



The Forest Service has created a comprehensive guide to the OT which can be found [HERE](#).

To learn more about the Ouachita National Scenic Trail visit [Friends of the Ouachita](#).

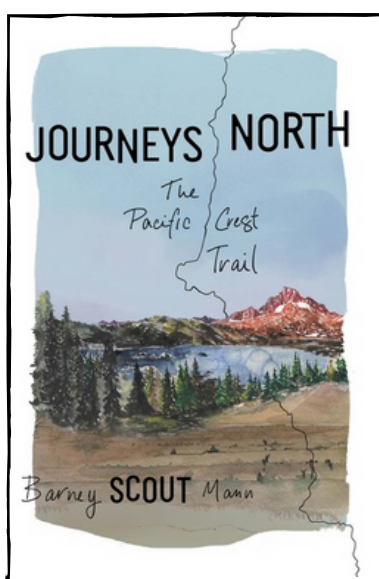
# BOOK NOOK



## "HeHo" by Patrick "Axyyl" Dixon

The story of one man's journey from hope to victory, HeHo takes the reader on a cross-continental adventure filled with discovery, humor, and wisdom. 100% of the proceeds from the sale of this book go to help those like Patrick Dixon's mother, who suffer from progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP). This is the story of a six-month hike from Mexico to Canada along the Continental Divide Trail – told by a man doing a long-distance hike for the very first time.

All proceeds from the purchase of this book are donated to PSP.org.



## "Journeys North" by Barney "Scout" Mann

In Journeys North, legendary trail angel, thru hiker, and outdoor advocate Barney Scout Mann spins a compelling tale of six hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail in 2007 as they walk from Mexico to Canada. This ensemble story unfolds as these half-dozen hikers—including Barney and his wife, Sandy--trode north, forming relationships and revealing their deepest secrets and aspirations. They face a once-in-a-generation drought and early severe winter storms that test their will in this bare-knuckled adventure. Only a third of all the hikers who set out on the trail that year would finish.

Journeys North is a story of grit, compassion, and the relationships people forge when they strive toward a common goal.





Outdoor**Vitals**  
LIVE ULTRALIGHT



**Alpine  
Start**



THANKS TO ALL OF OUR  
AMAZING SPONSORS!



**HENNESSY  
HAMMOCK**

