



# ALABAMA HIKER

The Official Newsletter of the Alabama Hiking Trails Society

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The Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Inc., is Alabama's foremost volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to planning, building, and maintaining hiking trails, and to the education for careful usage and enjoyment of Alabama's great outdoors.

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# Boy Scouts Install Flagg Mountain Kiosk

By Marie Arnott

Mother Nature came through to give us one more cool weekend with abundant sunshine to make the Flagg Mountain campout on April 22 -24 a complete success. Thirteen Boy Scouts from Troop 2 in Mobile journeyed to Flagg that Friday night to complete a service project for AHTS. They had built a kiosk to install at the north trailhead in Weogufka State Forest, the first new trail laid out to take the ECT off the roads and place it on wilderness trail in south Alabama.



Scout Troop 2: (Back) Kyle, Timmy, Nelson, Graham, Vladimir, Hogan, Will, Chris, Robert (Middle) Mica, Josh, Jordan (Front) Travis

Saturday morning dawned pleasant, but windy. While everyone was finishing up with breakfast, Dewayne Hussey, assistant scoutmaster, and I took a ride down to the trailhead to look at the kiosk site. We met Pete Rogers driving up to check on us and make sure we had made it to the summit OK the previous night. After a promise to return about dark to open the tower for the boys, he departed back towards home.

(Continued page 3)

## 2nd Annual National Trails Day Celebration Set for June 4th

Invite your friends and family and join us for the 2nd annual National Trails Day celebration in Alabama to be held this year on Saturday, June 4th, at Lake Martin.

The celebration begins at 9am with a demonstration of "Leave No Trace" ethics, a method for protecting our environment while participating in any outdoor activity, by state trainer Skip Essman. Then it's time to hit -the-trail with several short hikes along the new paths being developed by our friends with the Cherokee Ridge Alpine Trail Association (CRATA).

The CRATA is an enthusiastic and dedicated group of individuals that

are developing wonderful footpaths along the beautiful bluffs of Lake Martin. The six-miles of trail developed were recently dedicated and officially opened to the public.

National Trails Day was created by the American Hiking Society 13 years ago in an effort to inspire Americans to get outside and enjoy the nation's public trails. Over 1,000 similar events to that of the Alabama celebration will be held across the country.

Be sure to bring along lunch, drinks, and wear comfortable hiking or walking shoes.

(Continued page 2)

Forging Partnerships to expand the traditional outdoor hiking experience in Alabama.



## Message from the President

### *Passion and a Simple Brochure*

It's been three and a half years since I first noticed a brochure describing The Alabama Hiking Trail Society (AHTS) while shopping at my local outfitter. *Hike Alabama* were the words on the front cover that caught my eye. As one who loves to read, especially about hiking, I tossed it into my shopping bag along with my purchases. Later that night, as I read through this simple brochure, I had no idea that a passion deep within my soul had awakened.

Much has become of the Alabama Hiking Trail Society since that day. AHTS has grown and become a voice for the hiking community in Alabama, advocating trail development and preservation to those that will lend an ear. Hikes have led us down paths unveiling the many beauties and wonders of our state, the only urgency being that of a slower pace. Backpacking trips have allowed friendships to be forged deep in the wilderness, far from a hectic world that has lost touch with that which we have been given stewardship. Trail work days have rewarded us with a sense of pride and accomplishment and self worth, not caring if we were the best or if we finished first, or if we even finished at all.

My passion for hiking has been nurtured from year to year. In the beginning I was embarrassed to share a trail with fellow hikers because of physical challenges I faced, afraid I would be looked down upon and made fun of. Now, with every fall, a reassuring hand to help me up and a kind chuckle at the lightheartedness I make of the event are all that await. If only the world were so, things would be better for all.

Now, as I accept the responsibilities as president of AHTS, I can't help but reflect back upon all that I have seen these few short years and wonder, am I ready, or better yet, worthy of such a responsibility. AHTS has before itself many great opportunities to promote, build and maintain hiking trails in our state. We as members have the responsibility to support and participate in the many activities that the dedicated leaders tirelessly offer each month, an effort they would love to share with you. Through participation, members can truly help their organization, AHTS, reach its full potential. And I believe that it is this spirit that will be by my side in the next couple of years as I walk with you on the path before us.

*Mike Kennedy*

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## Election Results

Voting has been completed and new officers have been elected to the AHTS Board of Directors. They are: President - Mike Kennedy; VP Administration - Skip Essman; VP Membership - Jim Cotton; VP of Publicity - Joe Cuhaj.

Thank you all for voting in the election!

## National Trails Day®



**June 4, 2005**

### **National Trails Day (cont'd from pg 1)**

Directions to NTD 2005:

From Alexander City take Hwy 63 South or from Eclectic take Hwy 229 north to Hwy 229. Head east on Hwy 229 to Hwy 50. Head east on Hwy 50 and after crossing below the dam, take the first left to the overlook parking lot where the trailhead is located.

From Dadeville, take Hwy 49 south to Hwy 50. Take Hwy 50 west to the intersection of Overlook Rd. Turn right and head to the parking lot / trailhead.

## Section Leader Needed

We are in need of a Section Leader for Geneva State Forest. Last year we began building a trail around Geneva State Forest Lake. Due to a massive number of blowdowns along the Pinhoti Trail caused by Hurricane Ivan we haven't worked on this trail in a year.

We need a Section Leader who will take responsibility for this trail and organize trail work on it.

Please email Rick Guhse' at [rguhse@hotmail.com](mailto:rguhse@hotmail.com) if you are interested in taking on this section.



## Flagg Mountain (continued frm page 1)

Later, as we made ready to take the kiosk and the boys down to the trailhead, Joe Cuhaj pulled up. We went on while he waited for Mike Kennedy. They had planned to meet up and do some plotting with a GPS.

The kiosk had been precut and just needed to be assembled and installed on site. The task was well underway with all the boys participating when Joe and Mike walked through. I walked with them along the route that we had blazed the month before to the first water crossing when Johnny Brewer caught up with us. As with Joe and Mike, Johnny was thrilled to see the kiosk going in. Sweet!

I headed back to catch a ride with the Scouts going up to the campsite for lunch. During our break some of the Scouts practiced their tomahawk throwing skills, while Dewayne Hussey, Scout-mom Elaine Lowing, and I took a short hike down to the old CCC cabins. Restoration has progressed since I last visited and fresh cut lumber was awaiting installation.

While the Troop went to put the finishing touches on the kiosk, I stayed behind and began preparations for the leaders' supper of dutch oven chicken pot pie. It wasn't long before Joe and Mike hiked in, having made it up the ridge to the two abandoned cabins and then on up to the tower. They had accomplished their task with the GPS and flagged the portion where the blazing stopped so I could find my way back down on Sunday morning when I planned to lead the Scouts on a hike.

Despite my best efforts to convince them to stay for chicken pot pie, they graciously declined, having other commitments and a long drive ahead of them. It wasn't fifteen minutes after they left when Kent Cooper arrived. After chatting a while he headed down to see how the kiosk was coming along.

The evening cooled down and was just right for a fire in the big stone fireplace while we enjoyed assistant scoutmaster Dale Shephard's dutch oven apple cobbler. Sunday morning was another beautiful day and we were up early and ready to hike. After passing the cabins we took a side trip to the dam. Then it was on up to the abandoned cabins to look for Joe and Mike's flagging from the previous day.

AHTS and Troop 2 member Chris "Pathfinder" Arnott was leading the way, while the four adults followed along watching for stragglers. Twice I second guessed the heading we were on and twice I was over-ruled. Pathfinder led us directly to the flagging for a left turn and down the ridge we went. It was an excellent opportunity to show the Scouts what "all those lines" on the topo map meant.



Boy Scout Troop 2 from Mobile raising the Flagg Mt. kiosk.

The flagging was easy to follow and we soon came to the blazed section. Here I was able to explain offset blazes and the importance of switchbacks. Before we knew it a cheer went up ahead when the boys spotted the kiosk and the end of the trail. Chris had brought his GPS along and it showed we had just completed a 3.3 mile hike. While most of us chose to ride back up the hill, several Tenderfoot Scouts saw an opportunity to complete the Second Class rank requirement of a five mile hike. Accompanied by Dale, they walked back up to the tower.

As we packed up to head home, we felt somewhat disappointed that Pete Rogers had never showed up to unlock the tower. Our departure time was fast approaching when Pete's dad, Joe, showed up to save the day. Explaining that Pete had gotten tied up the previous night, he happily opened the door. The adults and boys alike looked out over the beautiful spring greens of central Alabama in awe.

Finally it was time to leave. Physically we were dirty and tired, but spiritually we were cleansed and renewed after a glorious weekend spent exploring God's creation.

**The deadline for the July-August newsletter  
is June 13th!**

**If you have any news, trails stories, or  
photos you would like to share, please send them  
to newsletter editor Joe Cuhaj by email at  
jcuahj@bellsouth.net or to the AHTS office.**



# TRAIL REPORTS

by V.P. of Trails Rick Guhse'

More trail work was completed during Easter Weekend, March 24, 25 and 26.

Saturday Jim Cotton and I drove to Flagg Mtn. at Weogufka State Park in Coosa County and met Johnny Brewer, Mike Kennedy, Marie Arnott, and son, Chris. We painted blazes along the north boundary staying well within the boundary line. This is an area with several small streams and rolling hills without much underbrush. This section will be easy to maintain.

We enjoyed lunch at a beautiful stream. Johnny Brewer filled his water bottle from the stream using his water filter. The water was rank! Johnny, check your filter. It looked ok but smelled awful!! Remember folks, clean your water filter after returning from every trip. Follow the instructions that come with your filter!!!

We blazed about half a mile or more until we came to an old road. This is where we'll pick up the blazing in June. Our goal is to blaze a trail along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of Weogufka State Forest. Blazing a trail consists of painting a rectangular blaze about the size of a dollar bill on trees along the route of the trail. We must blaze in both directions and sometimes the same tree isn't a good choice for line of sight from the opposite direction. With paint scraper in hand we smooth out the bark before painting the blaze. Sometimes we must scrape new blazes away when a more natural route is seen as a better choice for the pathway.

Along the pathway we removed brush and overhanging limbs. We do not remove topsoil as it will become compacted with use. Some natural aspects of a trailbed become natural waterbars diverting water off the trail. With long term low maintenance in mind we are cautious about leaving the trail's natural benefits in place.

In building the Flagg Mtn. Trail we'll complete the first trail section between Alabama's Pinhoti Trail and the Florida National Scenic Trail. Completing this short section of trail is part of our mission: To connect the Florida National Scenic Trail to Alabama's Pinhoti Trail, thus providing a continuous footpath from Key West, FL, to Cap Gaspe', Canada. We also add to the state-wide trail system by adding more trail. Not only do we build trail but we assume the responsibility of maintaining the trail as well. Mike Kennedy is Section Leader for Weogufka State Forest.

Friday and Sunday Jim Cotton and I removed more blowdowns caused by Hurricane Ivan from the Talladega River north to the second crossing of FS600. Jim was disappointed on Sunday because we didn't encounter more blowdowns. Sorry Jim. Let's get into the Cheaha Wilderness with the crosscut saw. There's over 200 blowdowns there! Boy, we sure know how to have fun!

Blowdowns are trees which have fallen over the trail. When the upper story of a tree covers the trail there are many

branches that need to be cut and removed. When a large tree trunk falls over the trail workers must adjust the cutting to compensate for the weight and pressure of the trunk as pieces are cut away. Sometimes we want these pieces to fall and roll into a position where they will shore up the edge of the trail bed. Often there's a real benefit to the trail when we cut away these blowdowns.

Folks, those of you who don't participate are missing out on so much fun. This is summer camp for adults. When we leave the forest we don't just enjoy the scenery. We leave it in better condition than we found it. We build something and we rebuild the trail every time we go out. Some folks are only satisfied in walking trail but the real joy is the fellowship, the meals together, the working together and walking down a section of trail after we just worked on it seeing the improvements we just made.

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## Trail Angels

by Erik Douglas

At one time I really thought I could eventually meet each member or at least the in state members. I've come to realize that Alabama is a large and somewhat long state, but I still hope to one day meet each member. I have gained so many friends who share the same passion for the trail and natural places that are so unique and special to Alabama.

Perhaps at some conference or trail crossing we will stop and share some experiences. I was fortunate to meet one of our Lifetime Members at the last Board of Director's Meeting at Open Pond in Conecuh National Forest this March.

Fred Kirch came all the way from Delaware to do some hiking in Alabama and add some sections of the Eastern Continental Trail. Saturday night I heard Fred mention that he wished to hike from the Florida Line where the trail enters Alabama to Andalusia. I saw an opportunity to spend some time getting to know Fred so I volunteered to serve as his shuttle. So mid-morning Sunday, Fred followed me to the old AHTS office in Andalusia where he left his car under the watchful eyes of the Andalusia Fire Department and then we drove back through the Forest along the path by which he would return.

I thoroughly enjoyed this quality time with Fred and was envious when I dropped him at the kiosk at the edge of Blackwater State Forest. The rewards of being a Trail Angel are priceless.

Thank you Fred, these opportunities become the memories we cherish. I hope to see you at Cheaha 2006!



# Activities Calendar

**Activity Leaders** are **VOLUNTEERS** who plan the Activity for your enjoyment. All Activities are open to the Public unless otherwise noted which may be due to restrictions on the size of the group. **To participate in Hikes, Camping Trips, Trail Work and Backpack Trips, YOU MUST notify the Activity Leader in advance that you will attend.** Should you fail to do this you may arrive to find the trip changed to a different location or cancelled. Activity Leaders will cancel an Activity if nobody calls to participate. Your participation is important once you agree to take part in an Activity. If you need to cancel you **MUST NOTIFY** the Activity Leader **AT ONCE!**

**Please check our website at [www.hikealabama.org](http://www.hikealabama.org) for last minute additions and changes**

## May

### 12 Trail Talk Thursday (Shoals Area)

No meeting will be held in May. Be sure to join the Shoals Area members June 9th for the next meeting. (256) 757-8733.

### 14 Chainsaw Certification Class (National Forest Service - Shoal Creek Work Center)

The National Forest Service is sponsoring a chainsaw certification course Saturday May 14th at 9am at their Shoal Creek Work Center. Certification is required to operate chainsaws in the forests and is critical for the AHTS to maintain trails throughout the state. AL Larry Holyfield (NFS) (256) 463-7208.

### 21 Flagg Mountain Trail Work (River Regions)

Join us for continuing trail work on the Flagg Mt Trail at Weogufka SF in Coosa County. We will be improving the blazed trail as well as enjoying the sights and serenity of the wilderness. We will meet at 9am at the trailhead and finish around 1pm. Bring water, snacks, and lunch as well as gloves, loppers and hand clippers if you have them, otherwise they will be supplied as well as tread improvement tools. Bug spray is recommended. AL Mike Kennedy - slohiker@earthlink.net (334) 657-3261.

## June

### 04 2nd Annual National Trails Day Celebration

Celebrate National Trails Day with AHTS on the new Cherokee Ridge Trail at Lake Martin. See the beautiful new trail system being developed by the Cherokee Ridge Alpine Trail Association. Meet at 9am. Skip Essman will give a presentation on Leave No Trace ethics prior to heading out on the trail. Camping will be available nearby on the lake if you'd care to spend the night. AL Mike Kennedy slohiker@earthlink.net or (334) 657-3261.

### 05 Board of Directors Meeting

The AHTS Board of Directors will meet at the campsite for National Trails Day. Many items will be discussed including plans for next year's conference to be held in March, 2006, at Cheaha State Park. The meeting is open to members. AL Mike Kennedy (334) 657-3261 or slohiker@earthlink.net.

### 09 Trail Talk Thursday (Shoals Area)

Speaker to be announced. Meets every second Thursday at Alabama Outdoors, N. Court St (immediately south of UNA campus), at 5:30pm. (256) 757-8733.

### 18 Flagg Mountain Trail Work (River Regions) See May 21st for details

## Possible Bartram Canoe Trail Trip

The Bartram Canoe Trail, a 15-mile paddle trail, was created through the bayous of the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, a Forever Wild tract that has been virtually undisturbed since first explored by botanist William Bartram in the 1700's. The trail has a series of floating camping platforms and includes a short hike on Mound Island, the location of several Indian mounds which is a National Historic Site. Joe Cuhaj would like to organize a 2-day trip down the trail this fall. This would require some planning such as canoe rentals and reservations for the platforms. We'd like to know how many people would be interested in such a trip. If enough people are interested, we'll finalize the details. Contact Joe and let him know by calling (251) 533-1812 or by email at [jcuahaj@bellsouth.net](mailto:jcuahaj@bellsouth.net).

## SELL THOSE RAFFLE TICKETS!

There is still time to get out and sell those raffle tickets for a chance at winning a Wilderness Pungo 120 Kayak. All proceeds from the raffle helps the AHTS with its mission to promote and protect a statewide hiking trail system.

Raffle tickets are only \$5 each or \$20 for a book of 5. Books of tickets have been mailed to all members. If you haven't received yours, contact the AHTS office today at (334) 244-1579 or by email at [ahts@hikealabama.org](mailto:ahts@hikealabama.org). The winner will be drawn and announced at National Trails Day (the winner need not be present). The kayak is provided courtesy of our friends at Southern Trails in Montgomery.

# The Hiker's Notebook

As sure as two or more hikers gather around a warming fire (AYCE, water cooler, etc) the usual conversations always drift to gear talk and finally to trail stories. Like an oral history, these stories are told and re-told and with each telling, the story grows. Everyone has a collection of favored memories and most enjoy both the telling and hearing. We have asked some hikers to share their "most unforgettable trail memories" with us for all to enjoy and perhaps you will share some of your memories for future issues. Send them to us at AHTS, 1425 I-85 Pkwy, Suite I, Montgomery, AL 36106 or by email at [ahts@hikealabama.org](mailto:ahts@hikealabama.org)

## A Family First by Ken Weathers

We recently spent a late March night on the southern loop of the Conecuh Trail in the Conecuh National Forest. This trail is only 5 miles long, but it was perfect for introducing my 10 year-old son and 8 year-old daughter to backpacking. KC, April, and Stitch (our 2-year old Lab) had a ball exploring 5 Runs Creek, listening to turkeys gobble in response to my pitiful owl hoot, and just being kids roaming free in the woods.

The highlight of the trip was the rope swing over Blue Spring. I think the name comes from the color you turn when you land in the water. The kids could have swam in that spring all day, but Wendy and I just jumped in enough times to prove to ourselves we are not old yet.

March is a great time to hike in Conecuh, with spring just getting cranked off. The night was cool enough for a good campfire, and the bugs were still in hibernation. I think the kids are ready to hit the Pinhoti next.

See you on the trail!

## Camping in the Clouds by Jedbear

We reached an acceptable campsite at the end of a very steep climb. We would have accepted any flat ground but luckily we stumbled onto a rather isolated spot a stone's throw from the trail but completely concealed from anyone passing by. We set up camp on the leading edge of a gradually sloping valley, more like a col. That evening, too weary from the day's hike in to do much more than eat and retire to our tents, I fell into an unsettled sleep. The air was too thin at this altitude for flatlanders and everything, including sleep, was much harder than it should be.

I came awake during the night to a vibration in the earth beneath me. From a distance, I began to hear a rumbling sound that steadily grew to the recognizable sound of many hoofs coming in the direction of our camp. As the pounding increased, so did my concern for safety. Before I could realize fear, whatever was stampeding toward us, was running through our campsite and between our tents. Just as quickly as it came, it was gone. As light appeared in the sky I climbed from my thin shelter to find the surrounding ground covered with the tracks of many elk. These huge animals of the Rockies came through our camp, in the dark, on a dead run, without touching a tent or even a guy line. The rest of the week we saw not a sign of elk, but a few days later, a bear came to pay my tent a visit. But that's another story.





## AHTS on the Web



Don't miss out on any last minute hikes or late breaking news! Visit the A.H.T.S. online at [www.hikealabama.org](http://www.hikealabama.org). Check out the photo gallery; learn more

about upcoming events: join in on an online discussion. And when you do your shopping for gear, head to the AHTS website first and click on our partnering links such as REI. When you purchase items through these links, AHTS will receive a portion of the sale to help continue our efforts.

### NEW MEMBERSHIP and RENEWALS

Your dollars contributed to AHTS, Inc. a tax exempt 501c3 non-profit corporation, are tax deductible and are your vote for support of an Alabama hiking trail system.

When you renew your membership, please consider renewing at a higher level of giving than last year. If this is the beginning of your membership, please consider giving at the highest level good financial responsibility will allow.

Most of our activities require no financial fees other than camping fees required directly by the campground or gas to drive to the activity location. Much of the planning is done by Activity Leaders who make it fun and easy for the participants. But it's not without work by dedicated people - your friends - who want you to have a great time.



## Have You Ever Considered....

Many of our members ask how they can be more active or help the AHTS meet its goals and mission. We invite you to consider any of the following opportunities.

- \* Activity Leader - Organize a hike in your area. It doesn't have to be anything big. A simple walk for an hour or two is sometimes the best.
- \* Trail Work - Contact the AHTS office and find out about our trail building and maintenance schedule.
- \* Trail Planning - The AHTS is planning new routes and trails throughout Alabama. Contact the office to find out where and how you can help.



When you volunteer to help AHTS achieve its goals, your time and expenses are tax deductible! Here are some basic deductions you can claim:

- \* All out-of-pocket expenses
- \* Mileage at 14 cents per mile
- \* Motel rooms - 100% deductible
- \* Meals - 50% deductible

Please contact your tax preparer or accountant for more information.

### The A.H.T.S. Store

There are still some items available in the AHTS Store. New merchandise such as t-shirts and hats will be arriving soon!

AHTS T-Shirts (L, XL, XXL) \$10

#### Books:

"Ten Million Steps" by Nimblewill Nomad  
Retrace the Nomad's steps along the ECT.  
1/2 proceeds go to the AHTS general fund, the other to the Flag Mountain Marker Fund.....\$25

"Hike Alabama" by Joe Cuhaj  
A guide to 48 of the best hikes in the state.  
All proceeds go to the AHTS general fund ...\$17.95

Make check or money order payable to the AHTS and mail them to:

AHTS, 1425 I85 Pkwy, Suite I,  
Montgomery, AL 36106

## Join Today . . . Enjoy Hiking Alabama's Great Outdoors!

*Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Inc. Member's Code: I understand that I am entitled to all rights and privileges of a dues-paying member; and that only members may hike the Trail across private property. When on the Trail, I agree to: Protect wildlife: hike only marked routes; not carry firearms; leave gates as found; use crossings on fences when possible: where permitted keep fires small, then drench and obliterate; carry out all refuse; report irregularities to property owners; pick up after those who have gone on before; leave only footprints.*

I understand that hiking the Trail is a privilege and that I do so at my own risk. Neither the Alabama Hiking Trail Society Inc. nor landowners are in any way liable for any injury or accident I might sustain while hiking the Alabama Trail.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer/Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Membership Info: Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer/Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |  |  |                       |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$30     | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Life * \$750   | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen \$15 (65 & over) | General Fund \$_____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contribution * \$100  | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting * \$150              | Land Trust \$_____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$15    | <input type="checkbox"/> Affiliate \$50        | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial \$200                | Building Fund \$_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Life \$500 |  |                       |

I learned about the Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Inc. from \_\_\_\_\_

\* Includes spouse and children 18 or younger.

Make checks payable to: Alabama Hiking Trail Society, Inc or AHTS. Mail to: AHTS, 1425 I85 Pkwy, Suite I, Montgomery, AL 36106 or use your credit card online at [www.hikealabama.org](http://www.hikealabama.org).

**ALABAMA HIKING TRAIL SOCIETY, INC.**  
1425 I-85 Pkwy, Suite I



Moving? Send your change of address to: [ahts@hikealabama.org](mailto:ahts@hikealabama.org) or the address below.