

Tye River Ridgerunner Reports



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What is a Ridge Runner? If you've hiked on the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) during its busy season, you might have crossed paths with a Ridge Runner - a cheerful, Trail-tested individual who lives and works on the Trail. Ridge Runners are often met with a lot of questions about their job: Are you a ranger? Do you live out here? What do you do all day? The primary role of a Ridge Runner is to educate hikers about Leave No Trace principles, which are essential for protecting the Trail and the A.T. experience. Ridge Runners are trained experts in these principles and the management concerns for their section of the Trail. While Ridge Runners work closely with the ATC's agency partners, including the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service, they are not law enforcement officers or rangers. Ridge Runners are knowledgeable about the rules and regulations of their section, but don't issue tickets or fines. Instead, Ridge runners educate hikers using a method called the "Authority of the Resource," which means they share why these regulations are in place and how they help protect the Trail and its visitors. Through this emphasis on education and conversation, Ridge Runners can connect with visitors over a shared love for the A.T. and act as a voice for the Trail. Ridge Runners are an important part of the Cooperative Management System because of their ability to work with visitors face-to-face - while the ATC, Trail Clubs, and land managing agencies along the Trail provide tons of information about Leave No Trace and Trail stewardship, posting that information online or at kiosks will never be as effective for visitors as having a conversation with a helpful, knowledgeable human being. The ability of Ridge Runners to mitigate resource damage at the high use,

sensitive areas they patrol cannot be overstated, and it is all done by making connections.