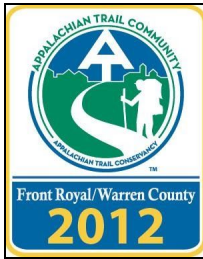


Possum's Rest Detective Quest



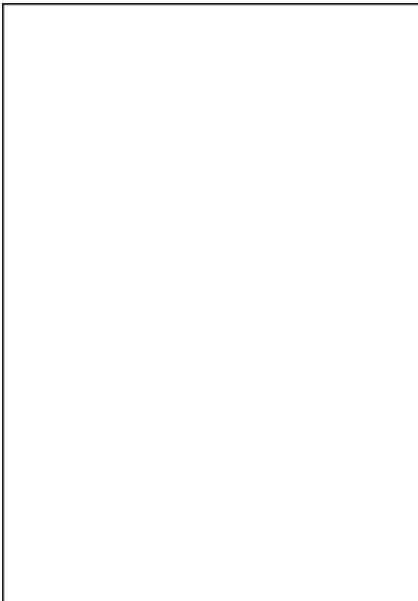
Quest Shenandoah is a program of the Front Royal/Warren County Appalachian Trail Community™ program. Front Royal/Warren County is a proud host of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and was designated an Appalachian Trail Community on April 21, 2012. Find other Quests, and guidelines for designing a Quest of your own at www.discoverfrontroyal.com or Like us at www.facebook.com/FrontRoyalWarrenCounty.ATCommunity/.

From Front Royal: Drive south about 4.3 miles on US Rte 522 (Commerce Avenue in town) to signs for Chester Gap. Turn **RIGHT** on Rte 665, then immediately **RIGHT** again onto Rte 610/Chester Gap Road. Follow to the end at Chester Gap parking lot. Quest begins at trailhead. When you reach the Possum's Rest overlook, just turn around and come back the same way.

Time: 1.5 hours; **Distance:** 1.4 miles roundtrip; **Difficulty:** Moderate easy. Some uphill climbs.

What you need: A pencil or pen. Steps are counted as moderate adult stride. Kids will take more!

NOTE: Clues are cued to 12 waterbars in this Quest, so you need to count them accurately along the way! There are places to check them off in the text. Just be sure you don't miss the first one!



These possum tracks mean “walk” until the text tells you otherwise:



Take it easy, **take it slow**,
Like a possum, mosey-oh.
Nature's clues you can find;
Just pay heed and take your time.

First thing you see upon the trees
Faint blazes red and yellow.
The first one means, “I mark the park.”
The second “Horses, hello!”

Mystery #1: Why the two big boulders?

Hint: Horses and hikers allowed to pass,
But nothing, please, that runs on ____.

To the next signpost you may race,
“Backcountry” it says, then Leave No Trace.
What does that mean, I hear you say.

“Don’t pick flowers, pack out waste.”



Ahead on the right a fallen tree

Tall plants around it, let them be:
I tell you nettles is their name,
But stinging hikers is their game.

At the base of each tiny hair
A micro-pump is waiting there
Filled with formic acid –
Red ants also pack it.



This trail we’re on was once a road
That led folks through a poplar cove.
What makes me sure that this I know?
Big rocks on left ‘ranged in a row.

But whoa there, pal! What’s this ahead?
A speed bump in dead-center tread,
And then a dip that runs off-kilter.
What the heck is being filtered?

Mystery #3: Why is this bump and dip in the
middle of the trail?

Hint: When plants are removed, then rain in
motion
Erodes our dirt into streams and _____.
To keep the soil from going too far,
Trail builders made this waterbar.

(From now on check each water dyke
‘Cuz they’ll mark clues along your hike.)

___ **Check off Waterbar 1**



In 12 to 15 steps,
The second fallen tree on left.

At its far end, to right you’ll see
Fat hairy vine climbs up a tree.

Poison ivy is its name,
For itchy blisters it’s to blame.
Yellowish berries in the fall
Birds sure love ‘em, eat them all.



In 32 or so more steps,
Two trees you’ll find, again, on left.
Their bark allows you to ID
Even when there ain’t no leaves.



**Black cherry on left, yellow poplar (also known as
tulip tree) on right.**

Black cherry looks like burnt corn flakes,
Yellow poplar smooth with a fungus case.



___ **Check off Waterbar 2**

Now we start up steep incline
Nose to the ground, uphill we climb
Glutes are working as we go
Up, up, up we chug so slow

___ Check off Waterbar 3

___ **Waterbar 4 a few feet ahead.**
Bendy young tulip tree, left of tread.
Look at the leaves – they're not that high
A tree named tulip? You'll see why!



___ **At Waterbar 5 on either side**
Two shrubs you'll see, six-ish feet high.
Break off a bit of twig and sniff:
Spicebush scent a citrus whiff.



Now forge ahead without stopping
While I tell you where you're walking.
This route not only Chester Gap Road,
But also Appalachian Trail of old.

As you walk, you hear that breeze
Rustling through the tulip trees?
Tornadoes aren't uncommon here
Thirty-nine in 60 years.

Mystery #4: Why?

Hint: A Chester dude's a hardy chap
To settle in a deep wind ____.

___ Check off Waterbar 6

If in spring you're strolling here,
Mayapples carpet everywhere.
And under leaves are petals white
Or poison fruit, so do not bite!



Mayapples

___ Check off Waterbar 7

In summer there will be no trace
Of mayapples here or anyplace.
Spring Ephemerals these are called,
Flowers that bloom, then quickly pall.

___ Check off Waterbar 8



A few feet prior to the next yellow blaze
On right, tree uprooted, around you gaze.
Summarize the things that you've learned.
Give yourself praise for lessons well-earned.

Test your detective skills^{1*}: Can you find a
young cherry tree? A slender poison ivy vine?
The direction water will flow in a rainstorm?
(Answers at bottom of page. **Stay right here**
for Mystery #5.)

Mystery #5: To left of trail hangs ropery
grapevine.

From it fruit and sometimes wine.
Poison ivy to grape compare.
How does each climb into the air?

^{1*} Young cherry tree to the right at the edge of the trail.
Note the black corn-flake bark forming toward the
bottom of the trunk. Check out the leaves and any
fruit. The horizontal marks on the younger bark are
called lenticels and are the way certain trees (apples,
cherries, birches, alders) breathe. Poison ivy is growing
up slender tree touching the far side of the fallen trunk.
Water will flow to the right.

Hint: One's a flopper with sparse tendrils,
The other a clinger with iron will.



___ At Waterbar 9, toilet paper I found
In this ditch dug in the ground.
When outdoors we pee or poop,
A hole in the earth must first we scoop.



Then cover it up, like cat, not dog,
And when we do, one thing to blog:
“Far from water, I should think,
Or poop pollutes what we all _____!”



___ **Waterbar 10 comes up pretty quick.**
Then count your steps. (Check legs for
ticks.)
Seventeen-ish paces to log on right:
Count wooden rings exposed to light.

How many years did this tree stand
Before it dropped onto the land?
Can you find your year of birth
In this fallen tree trunk's girth?



___ Check off Waterbar 11

Big hollow tree lies up ahead.

For Mr. Bear a winter bed?
But before you go in there,
Check for spider webs in the air.

Mystery #6: Why is an opening like this a
good place for a spider to spin its web?

Hint: Insect prey flies toward the light
Drifts on breezes day and night.
Any bug who tries to pass?
Destined for a spider breakfast.



___ Check off Waterbar 12

Soon you arrive at a concrete post
At which point, you can boast,
“The Appalachian Trail was a welcome sight.
I headed north by turning right.”

White blaze for 80 years has meant
Georgia to Maine is your intent:
2000 miles, five million steps
You put your muscle to the test.

Downhill a bit, what a relief
To catch your breath and rest your feet.
Stop at first tree with white blaze next.
Then we'll break and take a stretch.

Don't hug that tree though, I declare,
'Cuz 'round the back you'll find, I swear,
That hairy old enemy lying in wait –
The three-leafed one we love to hate.

Stuck also there, a nicer vine,
A five-leafed friend we call woodbine.
Virginia creeper it's other name,
In fall its leaves are red as flame.

Grapes and poison ivy
We have studied climbing.
Compare the woodbine's little feet
Like suction cups the trunk they meet.



**Mystery # 7: At a bend, on left you'll see
A crowd of seven skinny trees.**

Around their feet the trail sashays.
How'd they get here anyways?

Hint: Their mom was once a single tree.
Beside them now, she lies, debris.
See where she fell and sprouts grew up?
Her former stump an earthen bump.



Signs found at **park boundary**
Include one from PATC.
Six thousand volunteers each year
Maintain the Trail and keep it clear.

Two blazes, then on left you'll see
A very tall but fallen tree.
Study that bark, it's one you know –
Burnt corn flakes, not Cheerios.



Up a slope and then you find
The trees up here are different kinds
Study the pines that line your path.
Look at the needles. Do the math.

How many are there in each bundle?
_____ together here are trundled.

What else odd about these twins?
Halfway up, each has a spin.
Midway twist and bundle twosome,
Scotch pine is your best conclusion.

Very high in vitamin C,
Each fallen needle acid be.
Happy there among the duff
Blue- and goose-berry kind of stuff.



At double white blaze a splendid view
From rocks so high, up in the blue.
Straight ahead Dickey Ridge does lie.
Massanutten flanks on either side.



After you've looked east and west
Turn right and walk along the crest.
Follow AT no more, my pet,
Or you'll be in Maine before you know it.

Stroll short distance to a big Scotch pine
With one white tag and three red lines.
In between reddened marks
You'll see faint holes there in the bark.

Mystery #8: Bat, or bird, or nail, or fly.
Who made those little holes, and why?

Hint: In spring, sweet sap flows up a tree
Full of sugar, like honey.

Yellow-bellied sapsucker gets this treat;
A long fuzzy tongue performs the feat.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

A sapsucker station benefits all,
From spring to summer and to fall.
Wasp and ant and hummingbird
May stop by to sip or slurp.

Facing the tree, look to the left
You see a three-foot mini-cliff?
Thirteen-ish steps and look right down.
(May be woodbine 'cross the crown.)



Raise your eyes to big old rock. *
On its far side, the treasure box.
Under the lid a note for you.
Please sign the book and stamp it too.

So why's this place called Possum's Rest?
Your guess as good as mine, I guess.
If the answer you can give,
You're a Possum Quest detective.

Now turn around and head for home,
Another time the trail you'll roam.
I hope you've had some fun today
And that you will return someday.



***COVID OPTION OR BOX MISSING:**

In time of COVID, treasure boxes are removed

Yet treasure can be found for those that are shrewd

Instead of a stamp, it is a color you seek

Figure out the clue and follow your feet

To the store Mountain Trails located on Main Street

Submit your proof and receive a patch to wear for all to see!**

Last Clue: Remember that pine with the white tag and lines?

The color to choose is the boundary paint found on the tree.

****For the creative quester or those with difficulty discerning colors, you may take a photo of you/your group or your mascot (surprise us) at the site of the final clue.**

