



# Rethinking Life on the Appalachian Trail: The 2008 Thru-hike of "Rethinker"

*Gary Bond*

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Many dream of thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail. For Gary Bond, that dream had lain just below the surface for over 30 years. But in 2008, Bond adopted the trail name *Rethinker* and the dream was traded for an adventure.

## At the Trailhead

Leading up to this excursion and the chosen trail name was a period of “rethinking” for Bond. The beliefs that had been the foundation of his entire life had turned into nagging doubts. He longed to shed this burden and seek out Truth and a simpler way of life. And what better way than a long walk in the wilderness? What would *Rethinker* discover during five months on the Trail? What would he learn about Nature, about long-held beliefs, and about himself? How would he apply these lessons to the Larger Trail?

## The Long Walk

This book captures the many aspects of *Rethinker*'s AT thru-hike. Experience the physical and mental highs and lows of the grueling journey. Meet various characters and “legends of the trail” that *Rethinker* encounters, including the “Harbinger of Maine,” and enjoy their stories as well. Walk alongside *Rethinker* as he gains his “trail legs” in the mountains of North Carolina. Confront fear as peaceful sleep is invaded by a frightful night-time visitor in Tennessee. Be taught the definition of “necessity” beneath the spreading limbs of a Virginia maple. Endure the crucible of New Hampshire's White Mountains and observe confidence turn to humility by the magnitude of the quest. Witness restoration beside a New England pond as *Rethinker* marvels at the strange contrasting harmony of Nature. Slog through mucky bogs and ford swollen streams while hiking through Maine's 100-mile wilderness. And experience that “diamond day” when lifelong visions of a mystical fish camp are finally realized. Hear from mentors of times past whose words both haunt and encourage *Rethinker* along the way. See how lessons learned in childhood are applied to overcome obstacles and threats. Be amazed, as *Rethinker* was, by “trail angels” and the kindness of strangers.

## The Larger Trail

Whether you have made the hike yourself, or if you're a thru-hiker-wanna-be, or if you simply like to vicariously experience the journeys of others, this book will have something for you. *Rethinker* vividly portrays the wonder of the Appalachian Trail thru-hike experience while also examining the deeper meaning for him on the Larger Trail. In addition, he shares many useful tips and hiking gear advice from his own experiences for those who would attempt the trek. After five million steps and thousands of white blazes, covering 2,175 miles of trail stretching from Georgia to Maine, join *Rethinker* during the bittersweet moment of journey's end on the rocky peak of Katahdin. After all the rethinking of the journey and all the lessons learned, what would be the answer to life's questions? Would a key be found to unlock life's Great Mystery?

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