



Newsletter of the

BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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BMTA Officers

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 Vice President: Ralph Heller
 Secretary: vacant
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 TN/NC Maintenance:Eric Eades
 Smokies Maint.: Jim Lumpkins
 Construction: George Owen
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 Corridor Protection.... George Owen
 Bylaws Revision..... Tom Keene
 Nominations..... Steve Cartwright

Mark your calendars!

Saturday November 8 has been set for our annual meeting, which will be held in the **Community Room at Appalachian Community Bank in Blue Ridge**. We are planning a hike for early arrivers on Friday and special hikes on Saturday and Sunday. Saturday evening we will be enjoying a wonderful meal, voting on bylaw changes and new board positions for next year.

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Linda Davis – A Gracious Lady We Will Really Miss

by George Owen



It was a great shock to all of us when our much-beloved and very active BMTA Tennessee leader Linda Davis died June 17 very suddenly at home.

Linda had been fighting cancer over many months. Finally it appeared to be in remission last year only to show signs of reappearing this year. However, no one expected this quick demise, especially after she just began treatments again.

For many years Linda has been a "backbone" member of the BMTA from Cleveland, Tennessee, the place of her birth and current home. She was one of the early members of the BMTA from Tennessee, loved to hike and work on our trail. Linda was on the board currently as our Tennessee representative and also as our delegate to the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition. Previously she has served our board in

various other ways.

"Kind graciousness" might be one of the best ways to characterize Linda. She was more patient with situations and other people's foibles than most of us. All of us knew her as a wonderful companion, whether on the trail, visiting at home or meal, or traveling to trail meetings. Her hearty laugh and dedication to the outdoors and trails will be one of the great treasures she leaves to us. This writer has simply to confess it: Linda Davis was one of my favorite people, and I now have a significant hole in my life's joy left by her death. But, man, am I glad I knew her and had so many wonderful memories in which she was a very important part.

It was also my joy to watch Linda find a new special companion in life who shared her love of the outdoors, trails, and many other things. Thus it was such a delight to see her and Ed Talone of the American Hiking Society together now for many months. We of the BMTA are so thankful that Ed was able to come down and share so much of himself and his time these recent months to help Linda in her continuing cancer fight.

The funeral service for Linda was held June 20 at the First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Pastor Cliff Hudson officiating. Linda was a faithful

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Linda Davis A Lady We will Really Miss

continued from page 1

member of the church choir and a teacher of the St. Andrews Sunday School class at this congregation. Interment was held at Ft. Hill Cemetery in Cleveland with arrangements by the Grissom Funeral Home.

Linda is survived by her two daughters Melina and Ashley, two sisters, and three grandchildren. She was employed by Aflac and Mutual of Omaha insurance companies. In addition to the BMTA, Linda was a member of the Hiwassee and Cherokee hiking clubs. She was born September 20, 1953.

The BMTA has suffered a great loss. Linda, our dear and gracious friend, we will really miss you!

More Memories.....

We all remember Linda's essential decency, her kindness, her warmth, and her mock-grouchy cheerfulness. She had a wonderful sense of humor, which was at its best in difficult moments.

One of my first memories of Linda came on an outing up to Waucheesi Bald about five years ago as we were making to push to complete the trail. Ken Jones was leading. There was some excitement. It was a new section to many of us. Plus Waucheesi Mountain Road was a steep, tough climb for all our vehicles. Linda was driving her old black Ford Explorer. Near the top it began to overheat - badly. The steam rolled out from under the hood. A group of sages gathered, none of us knowing enough to be very useful.

"Well," said Linda, "you had better stand back. It looks like my Ford Explosion is about to live up to its name."

Tom Keene



Tailgate Safety Briefing

photo - Betty Petty

National Trails Day, Saturday, June 7, 2008

by Ken Jones

We had a great National Trails Day event with 29 workers helping build a much needed reroute of the John Muir / Benton MacKaye Trail. We had participants from all four of the sponsoring clubs (Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Chattanooga Hiking Club, Cherokee Hiking Club, and Hiwassee Hiking Club) as well as 5 guests. We started the events of the day with sign-in, awarding T-shirts and door prizes, and a tailgate safety briefing. Worker safety was an especially important consideration since the temperatures hit the mid-90s for the day. With the large number of workers, we split into 3 crews that worked on different tasks and sections of the reroute. One crew worked on brushing out an old road bed, while there were two digging crews working on different side hill segments to construct new tread.

The brush out crew finished cleaning out all of the old road bed (0.15 miles). The lower digging crew finished about 420' of new tread construction, while the smaller in numbers upper digging crew completed 300' of new tread for the day. The day was a wonderful success, with all of the workers performing great in some really difficult conditions. All of the workers completed the day safely, although a few workers suffered some stings when they tangled with some yellow jackets along the way.

Special thanks go out to all of the following workers that made the event so successful: Ken Jones, Stephen Cartwright, Tom Waters, Al Rymer, Will Rymer, Jack Rymer, Rick Harris, Cady Pannell, Clayton Pannell, Bill Lundin, George Owen, Ryan Nunley, Ester Nunley, Ron Nunley, Steve Biatowas, Randy Morris, Jane Bohannon, Rick Rutledge, Eric Rutledge, Ross Broadway, Elberta Broadway, Gary Smith, Ralph Van Pelt, Eric Anderson, Kathy Ryan, Betty Petty, Brenda Harris, Donald Box, Steve Barnes

Mark Your Calanders! *(continued from page 1)*

Information on the proposed bylaw changes will be available for review and comment shortly. Planning for this event is still in progress and more information, including accommodations in the Blue Ridge area will be published in future newsletters. Do plan to attend. This will be a great time to visit with your fellow members and discuss future plans for the BMTA. - **Ralph Heller**, Planning Chair

Beautiful Day in the Cohuttas June's Georgia Worktrip

By Tom Keene

For years Mike Christison has maintained a beautiful section in the Cohutta Wilderness, section 10b, between the BMT's intersections with the Jacks River Trail and the Hemptop Trail. Mike has done such a good job we have never had an excuse to go out and enjoy that part of the trail.

Recently Mike's been under the weather - we are happy to report he is now on the mend - so we figured it was a good chance to enjoy a pretty part of the Cohuttas and help assure the summer growth doesn't get ahead of him.

We had a beautiful day, and six seasoned workers: Walt Cook, Darcy Douglas, Tom Keene, T. O. Mitchell, Bill Ross and Bob Ruby. And a bonus: Vicki and David Kelsey joined us for breakfast at the Village Restaurant. It was great to see them again.

The work was mostly with swingblades and pruners, though we also refreshed a bit of side-hilling. We worked trail-north from the Jacks River Trail and covered most of the section. But the agreed endtime came before we finished, so there was still work to do near Spanish Oak Gap. The July worktrip on the Heptop Trail with the Forest Service may present a chance to finish the job. Thanks to all who came out.

Three April '08 Walk-Thru Trips *(continued from pg 3)*

just redone some sidehilling before the trail reaches the wilderness boundary. Crossing the stream into the wilderness - slippery on rocks - the next turn left is not clearly indicated. Met a couple here thru-hiking the BMT who described difficulty finding the way at a couple of wilderness intersections - missing signs. This is a continuing problem that I have reported to the Forest Service. I cleared some growth blocking the view of the tree with the BMT blaze at the FS. Rd. 45 crossing. Overall, on the section from Rd. 45 down to Thunder Rock, just a few limbs could be cut and the blazes are aging and dimming.

Working Hours: 4.5 Driving Hours: 2.0 Hwy. 68 to Coker Creek Camping Area Apr. 25

On Friday, Apr. 25, I drove up to the BMT crossing on TN 68 in the afternoon and began working west toward the Hiwassee River. Blazes are plentiful, but need renewing. The first 1.5 miles to the high point primarily needs some brushing out. From the high point for the approximately 3 miles to the camping area at the end of FS Rd 22-B is also in pretty good shape except for brushing out and small trees starting to grow into the trail. This latter part is nearly all sidehill trail and darn pretty - Wildflowers everywhere. Several other things: 1) At the TN 68 start, on the SW corner, someone recently dumped a whole truckload of garbage that the FS needs to pick up -toilet, large doll, many bottles, etc. Terrible! 2) In the first mile there is a 15" deadfall with bottom 10" off ground. 3) At the high point over a mile in there is a tree down that has to be crawled through. In the last mile before FS 22-B there are *(Continued on pg 5)*

Swingblades of Fury July's Georgia Worktrip

By Bill Ross

The July work trip in Georgia was our semi-annual combined work trip between the BMTA and the Forest Service on the Hemp Top Trail. On July 26, twenty-two trail volunteers and two Forest Service personnel made a swingblade assault on the summer growth. The area of focus was the approach trail between Dally gap and Spanish Oak Gap, and along the BMT from Spanish Oak Gap to Double Springs Gap.

The group was ably led by Larry Thomas of the Conasauga Ranger District. Of the 22 volunteers, there were five on horseback, and eight BMTA members. The cavalry was dispatched first, to work the area between Hemp Top and Double Springs Gap. The ground troops followed, with both groups meeting up a little after lunch. All the intended work was completed, and the trail is clear of briars and overgrowth. Our thanks go out as usual to the FS volunteers for the great work they do on the BMT, and throughout the district.

BMTA members on this work trip were: Steve Bayliss, Larry Dumas, Bill Edmundson, Ralph Heller, Ken Jones, Doug Kleiber, George Owen and Bill Ross. Total travel time for BMTA members was 24.5 hours; total work time was 38 hours.

Georgia Maintainer Hours

Between July 1, 2007 and Dec. 31, 2007

As reported. Recorded by Tom Keene(apologies for lateness)

<u>Maintainer</u>	<u>Work</u>	<u>Travel</u>	<u>Total</u>
Blount, David	4	4.5	8.5
Cook, Walt	12	11	23
Dominy, Marty	4	4	8
Dumas, Larry	5	1	6
Hamrick, Bill	3	4	7
Jump, Laurence	8	4	12
Keene, Jane	2.5	1	3.5
Keene, Tom	8.5	2	10.5
Korean Alpine Club	50	50	100
Maddox, David	20	12	32
Meadows, Margaret	4	4	8
Mitchell, Tom	3	2	5
Oldfield, Tony	4	4	8
O'Quinn, Kevin	4	2.5	6.5
Owen, George	33	11.5	44.5
Smith, Nancy	7	6.5	13.5
Tuten, Debbie	4	6	10
Guest Hours			
Bogue, Mary	4	4.5	8.5
Bogue, Ron	4	4.5	8.5
Jump, Fils	8	4	12
Totals	192	143	335

John Muir Reroute

On weekday worktrips (6/12, 6/18, 7/3, 7/11, 7/18) subsequent to the National Trail Days event, several hardy volunteers were able to complete another 1250+ ft of the John Muir Reroute. Braving yellow jacket attacks nearly every day and one charging deer were Ken Jones, Clayton Pannell, Gary Smith, Rick Harris, and Steve Biatowas.

HOURS WORKED: 108.5 HOURS TRAVELED: 20

7/12 TN Work Trip

We had another good day of side hill tread construction with the monthly BMT work trip for Tennessee. The afternoon high hit the mid-nineties, but six of us hung in there digging in some difficult areas. We completed another **325'** of new tread, stopping almost at the head of a drainage, within about 200' of the top of the high ridge. Participating were Ken Jones, Clayton Pannell, Steve Biatowas, Eric Eades, David Blount, Rick Harris

HOURS WORKED: 34 HOURS TRAVELED: 13.5

Board Meeting July 16

by Betty Petty

On July 16, 2008 the BMTA Board met at Reflection Riding in Chattanooga, TN where we were graciously hosted by Jeff Hunter who is now the caretaker there. We were all envious of him being able to live in such a beautiful and private place!

The chief topic discussed in the meeting was the revision of the by-laws. An agreement was hashed out and the revised by-laws will be mailed to the members under separate cover along with the 2008 membership directory shortly.

We elected two replacement board members – Bob Ruby as Newsletter Editor and Jeff Hunter as Publicity. A nominating committee was appointed to make nominations for next year's board chaired by Steve Cartwright and assisted by George Owen and Walt Cook. In other business we discussed to rewrite of the Databook, the purchase of new tools for Tennessee Maintenance (approved), the fall cleanup trip to the Smokies, plans for the annual meeting, and plans for a memorial hike for Linda Davis.

Three April '08 Walk-Thru Trips

by George Owen

Dry Pond/Thunder Rock to Big Frog , Mid-April

I forgot to record the date, but sometime in mid-April I drove up to U.S. 64 in the afternoon. First I walked up to the powerline crossing above the river about a quarter mile from Hwy. 64 on the Dry Pond/BMT and used the weedeater on the growth there.

Next I surveyed the BMT from Thunder Rock Campground to FS Rd. 45. The FS has done a good job of insuring the trail was preserved where the new power line crosses. However, people have created a new trail on the last 150 yards where the BMT empties into the campground which needs fixing so that the trail ends at the sign and information board. I picked up at FS 221 heading south toward Big Frog. The trail all the way to the Big Frog Wilderness boundary is in excellent shape. It looks as though someone has *(Continued on page 4)*

National Trails Day(GA), June 7, 2008

by Bob Ruby

We had about 50 people stop to talk to us at the BMTA booth on NTD at Stone Mountain Park. They ranged from those who had never heard of the trail to those who had hiked significant portions of it. This was fewer than last year, due primarily to the heat.

The display was updated to emphasize the completed trail, rather than "a trail in the making". We now have a blowup of the BMT Overview Map. A laminated copy of last fall's New York Times article on the BMT emphasizes that it is "Appalachia's Other Trail". The new materials are now in the display kit for future use.

The most humorous part of the day was that I had picked several of our stock photos of trail work for the panel headed "A Trail Maintained by Volunteers." Nancy Shofner, who was working a GATC booth, came by and remarked: "This is me ... and this is me ... and this is me again!" I guess that shows how much work she did, and how far back some of the pictures go. I especially want to thank Tom and Jane Keene for coming out to help staff the booth. It was really helpful to be able to take a break and get out of the heat occasionally.

Sept. 13-14 (Sat-Sun) BMT (TN)

Sixmile Gap to Tellico River Backpack

Leader: Bob Ruby

Co-leader: Sandi Still

This is one of the prettiest sections of the Benton MacKaye Trail in Tennessee. It includes the Bald River Wilderness Study area. In spite of the drought, water will not be a problem as the trail parallels both Brookshire Creek and the Upper Bald River.

On the first day, we will cover nine miles. After dropping a car at the finish and shuttling eleven miles, we will start with a short bushwhack from the top of Waucheesi Mountain to pick up the BMT at Sixmile Gap. From there we'll follow a primitive section of the BMT over Round Top and Rocky Top mountains, around Sled-Runner Gap and down the Brookshire Creek Trail to our campsite along the creek. On the second day, we will cover six miles: continuing our descent until we reach the Upper Bald River, then following the BMT upstream along the river to cross it and hike over Sugar Mountain and down to the Tellico River. There we will pick up our cars and return to the start. Afterward, we will celebrate with Mexican food in Copperhill, TN.

To register, contact Bob Ruby at hikingchair@bmta.org or 404-252-8888 or Sandi Still at 404-248-9585.

Georgia Work Trips for Summer

August 23 - Georgia maintainers will travel to TN to help finish the reroute on the John Muir section. Meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 AM to carpool to TN. No trail head meeting scheduled in case the trip shifts. Call for update Aug. 10 or after. Trip leaders are George Owen owenga@ellijay.com, or 706-374-4716); and Tom Keene, tkeene@kennesaw.edu, 770-422-4838, or 770-722-6016, the night before only.



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Editorial: Are Backpackers Packing? NOT!

by Betty Petty

Recently an article appeared on the front page of the Chattanooga Times underneath a photograph of a attractive young, blonde woman with a pack holding a pistol in one hand and her hiking poles dangling uselessly in the other. While the body of the article was not badly written, most people probably never got past the picture and its description of this hiker's newfound need to take a gun with her in wake of the hiker murders last spring.

Closer examination of the picture revealed no visible holster and a gun that was less than ideally suited for carrying in a pocket or a pack. It had a hammer which could catch on clothing or shift under forces inside a pack. Obviously carrying a gun inside your pack is not particularly good protection. If you encounter danger, you have to take your pack off to get at the gun. So, to be of very much use, the gun must be carried externally where it can be grabbed quickly. The most common places (thigh holsters and chest holsters) interfere with your pack. Also an externally carried gun must be shielded from brush which could cause it to accidentally discharge perhaps shooting the carrier or a companion.

Additionally, guns are HEAVY! In a time when most try to keep their pack weight under 30 lbs, why should you add something that weighs more than your tent or bedroll? Guns have no equal as an offensive weapon (i.e. for law enforcement) but as defensive weapons they are not especially effective. Your attacker will either have the drop on you with his own gun, have grabbed you or be lunging toward you to grab you by the time you realize you are in danger. If he has a gun, any attempt to pull your own gun will get you shot. If he has grabbed you or is attempting to grab you, he is likely to grab your gun before you can get it out into firing position. So some other weapon such as pepper spray might be better.

Nearly all hikers already have what may be the best defensive weapon available for such a situation and it does not require any additional weight. Only a very few hikers these days do not make use of the greatest safety device available for hiking – hiking poles or a hiking stick. These lifesavers are invaluable for stream crossings, slippery places and relieving the strain on your knees on steep trails. They are also great defensive weapons. While the poles are lightweight and do not make as good a club as a heavy stick, they make even better stabbing weapons with their sharp points.

If you still think you need a gun, then training in the use of it is a must. In the history of war nearly half of the soldiers have failed to use their guns even in combat. There is a serious psychological barrier to overcome to shoot another human being. Today's armies realize this and do extensive training to overcome it. If you have not trained yourself, even a moment's hesitation on your

part may enable an attacker to seize your gun and disarm you. It is far better that you take some martial arts classes in stick fighting (yes, they do exist) and learn to defend yourself with your poles!

This edition of the BMTA Newsletter, compiled and edited by Betty Petty, is printed on 40% recycled paper. All input for the next newsletter should be submitted to the new editor, Bob Ruby.