



BENTON MacKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Volume 28 No. 7 October, 2008



*George Minnigh at BMT Grand Opening
Annual Meeting Hikes*

Friday Afternoon Nov 7

Sec. 1: BMT/AT Loop from Three Falls

Leader: Bob Ruby

This will be a moderate, six-mile loop hike from Three Forks. We will ascend on the AT along Stover Creek, visit the new AT Stover Creek shelter and loop back down to Three Forks on the BMT. For more information and to sign up, contact Bob Ruby at hikingchair@bmta.org or 404-252-8888.

Saturday Mid-day Nov 8

Sec. 6: Fall Branch to Weaver Creek Rd

Leader: George Owen

This will be a moderate, six-mile hike south from Fall Branch over Rocky Mt. and Scroggin Knob to Weaver Creek Road. Highlights include Fall Branch Falls, Rocky Mountain (highest point on GA BMT), vistas and fall color. For more information and to sign up, contact George Owen at 706-374-4716.

Sunday Morning Nov 9

Sec 12: Linda Davis Memorial Hike

Leader: Darcy Douglas

This hike is in honor of Linda's memory and will cover the section that she maintained. It extends 3.3 miles from FS 221 on Chestnut Ridge just north of the Big Frog Wilderness down to the Thunder Rock campground on the Ocoee River. For more information and to sign up, contact Darcy Douglas at 404-497-0818.

Annual Meeting 2008

We hope everyone is finalizing plans to attend the **Annual Meeting** in the community Room at Appalachian Community Bank in Blue Ridge Georgia on November 8. Reservations are starting to arrive. We have planned hikes on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for all who wish to participate. The formal meeting starts at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. The buffet dinner includes beef, chicken, apple cobbler and other selections that should please everyone.

We are proud to announce that our featured speaker is **George Minnigh, Backcountry Management Specialist for the Smokies.**

George was instrumental in assisting us lay out the BMTA through the Smokies and to deal with the regulations that had to be followed when creating a trail through this premier national park. George will discuss our responsibilities for maintaining the trail in the Smokies, which differ from national forest requirements. He will also discuss the upcoming celebrations in 2009 of the 75th anniversary of the park and how we might participate.

We also have to decide on some important matters which require membership participation. We will be voting on the bylaw revision proposal and for BMTA officers for 2009.

Remember! This is a once-a-year opportunity for everyone to get together, socialize, make new friends, ask questions, and learn about future plans for the BMTA. A registration form as well as updated information on activities for the Annual Meeting can be found on our web site. We look forward to seeing you!

Saturday Mid-day Nov 8

Leader: TBD

We are also planning a shorter, easier hike for Saturday afternoon. Details will be announced on www.bmta.org when available. For more information and to sign up, contact Bob Ruby as above.

BMT Backpack: Waucheesi Mountain to Tellico River September 13-14

Submitted by: Bob Ruby

We had hoped that this mid-September backpack would have early-fall weather, but we got late-summer weather, thanks to Hurricane Ike. It was more than 80° on the ridgetops.

Thanks to co-leader Sandi, we had shortened the backpack by 6 miles and 1200' to start from Waucheesi Mountain instead of Unicoi Gap. This was originally done to allow for the long drives to/from the Tellico Plains area and the shuttles before and after the hike. It also put our campsite on reliable Brookshire Creek, which turned out to be critical since the spring by the campsite that I had used on my scouting hike was dry. As it was, we reached our campsite with everyone being out of water due to the heat.

After meeting the Lehoulliers and eating at a great bakery in Tellico Plains, the six of us dropped a car at our end point on the Tellico River and shuttled to our start atop Waucheesi Mountain. The first day we picked up the BMT at Sixmile Gap and hiked along the TN/NC state line, up and down a series of peaks (yes there is a Rocky Top in TN) and gaps that were draining in the heat. This part of the BMT alternates between nice trail and some overgrown areas, where there are few BMTA maintainers in TN. Everyone agreed that, in spite of this, the trail through the Bald River Wilderness Study Area was rewarding.

Late in the afternoon "Tipi Walter" with his companion Shunka met us at Sledrunner Gap and joined us to camp for the night along Brookshire Creek and for our Sunday hike. Tipi had learned of our hike from BMTA publications and planned his monthly ten-day backpack to meet up with us.

We broke camp Sunday morning and hiked a couple of miles down along Brookshire Creek to its confluence with the Bald River, four miles up along the river to Sugar Mountain, and two miles down to our destination at the Tellico River. The 1100' climb up Sugar Mountain felt easy, gradual and enjoyable compared to Saturday's ups and downs.

After picking up all the cars, four of us stopped on the way back for a great meal at El Rio Mexican restaurant in Copperhill, TN.

Anyone interested in exploring the BMT (TN) from Unicoi Gap south along the Hiwassee River to Childers Creek should join us on our

Tennessee Group Clears Near Big Frog September 13 - Workday

Submitted by: George Owen

It was a small group on the Sept. 13 Tennessee regular work trip, with four people from Tennessee and one from Georgia. Yet we ended up doing a thorough clearing job for about three miles of trail in and near the Big Frog Wilderness.

We met at 9:00 a.m. at the Thunder Rock parking area just off U.S. 64. Then we drove to where the BMT crosses Forest Service Road 221. Here we began our work southward toward and then into the Big Frog Wilderness.

Over the next several hours we managed to clear the trail of several tree downfalls and slingblade and lop summer growth. This included all of the trails now officially BMT that also had the designations West Fork and Rough Creek Trails, up to the point where the latter intersects with the Fork Ridge Trail. By early afternoon the morning fall-like weather was turning to summer heat, so having completed our original assignment of clearing the Rough Creek Trail, we turned back to our vehicles.

Arriving at the vehicles we made a big and important exchange: moving the Tennessee tools sent by Eric Eades, outgoing Tennessee/North Carolina maintenance director, to the vehicle of nominee for that position, Rick Harris. Our work all done, somewhere around 3:00 p.m. we scattered to the four winds.

It had been our special pleasure on this trip to meet and become acquainted with two visiting newcomers: Suzanne Bennett and Jim Griffin. Both turned out to be excellent workers.

Attendees: Suzanne Bennett, Jim Griffin, Rick Harris, George Owen, Gary Smith.

Hours worked: 25, Hours traveled: 8

November 1-2 backpack (see Sept. writeup or www.bmta.org).

BMTA Members: Bob Ruby, Sandi Still, Walter Wehner ("Tipi Walter")

GATC Members: Jason Bone, Bob & Bobbi Lehoullier, Mike McCown

Licklog Reroute Completed September 27 - Workday

By George Owen

IT'S DONE! IT'S OPEN!

The great Wallalah and Licklog mountains reroute scattered in four sections over two miles has been completed and was opened on the Georgia worktrip of September 27.

Working on an average of every other month over almost two years on this project, work teams have been digging four big swinging loops of one great switchback each to take out extremely steep and dangerous portions of the climbs up and down Wallalah and Licklog. Over the years hikers have struggled up the old trail route, and we even had reports of some falling on this, the steepest portion of the BMT in Georgia. Even one of our maintainers seriously fell. While still the toughest portion of the BMT in the state per mile, it is now much safer and more easily traversed.

The interesting thing is that we completed this last 200-300 yards with only a minimum-sized crew - but what a great working bunch these "Hulk" half-dozen were! Yes, only six worked hard to get it all done, as we completed the clearing and digging on the "big curve" astride the upper northwest slope of Licklog Mountain. We had expected about perhaps a dozen, but we suspect the drastic Atlanta and north Georgia gas shortage had its toll.

Six of us met for breakfast at the Village Restaurant and then drove up to meet Walt Cook who started hiking in from the Skeenah Creek trailhead on GA Highway 60.

Unfortunately, after driving up to the trail via the Tanner property, Bill Ross became ill and had to return home.

For the next several hours we cut and dug rapidly, admittedly a little shallow near and into the great trail curve to complete the work that day. Shortly after lunch Walt Cook began painting the blazes. By 2 p.m., teams were opening the last uncleared yards at each end of this last section. Walt stayed on about another hour to paint after the rest of us began the hike to the vehicles.

No longer do hikers have a place on the BMT in Georgia with climbs approaching 35 percent for some yards (literally, some brief uphill in this area became that steep). Yep, it's a big improvement. (We let the original designer of this route attend this trip - its time he learned

Mr. Parkay Gives Back (BMT Profile)

By Jeff Hunter

In 2006, Chris "Mr. Parkay" Johnson hiked the Appalachian Trail from end to end. As happens so often with long distance hikers, upon completing the AT, he felt the need to find a new trail. In December 2006, he hiked the entire Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) southbound. He later came back and hiked the southernmost 93 miles of the BMT.

When hikers discover a trail that they love, they often give a little something back. Giving back can take many forms including performing trail maintenance, making a financial contribution, or something completely different. Mr. Parkay falls into the latter category.

Using his considerable computer skills, Mr. Parkay put together a Google Earth profile of the BMT. That file has been available for download on our website for some time. Recently, Mr. Parkay upped the ante by creating profile maps of the entire BMT. For those not familiar, a profile map shows the elevation gain and loss on the trail - in a visual manner. When combined with a databook and a map, the trail profile makes an indispensable tool for planning a hike.

These profile maps are now available on www.bmta.org under "Free Downloads". Thank you Mr. Parkay!

how better trail is made!)

A BIG THANKS goes out to all who helped make this series of relocations possible with their hard work over a number of months. I especially want to thank those who showed up amidst a gas crisis to get this final chapter in the great Wallalah-Licklog relo written.

Workers: Walt Cook, Eric Eades, Jim Griffin, Bill Hamrick, Ralph Heller, George Owen

Hours worked: 37.5, Hours traveled: 18
(including those of Bill Ross)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 11 - Tennessee Work Trip: John Muir Trail from reroute to Coker Creek, We plan to use chain saws to remove several trees across the trail and brush cutters, swing blades and loppers to brush out the trail. We want to get this section of trail in spiffy shape before the fun hike planned for early November. Meet at US 441 and TN 30 intersection at 8 AM. Park in the lot across TN 30 from the convenience store. Contact: Ken Jones 423-745-2451 or mkjones@comcast.net. Please let Ken know you are coming, so he can have adequate tools.

October 18 - Fall Color Dayhike: Dally Gap to Jack's River (see September article or BMTA.ORG), Contact: Tom Keene - 770-422-4838

October 25 - Georgia Work Trip: On Section One, just south of Three Forks, and on Section Two, near Bryson Gap. We will refresh side-hilling and perhaps create water diversions. We meet at the East Ellijay (not Blue Ridge) Waffle King at 8:00 AM. Or meet at the Three Forks trailhead at 9:30 AM. Contact: Dave Maddox, 770-867-8237 or Tom Keene, 770-423-6232 or 770-722-6016 (the night before only) or tkeene@kennesaw.edu.

November 1-2 - Backpack Unicoi Gap to Childers Creek: (see September article or www.bmta.org), Contact: Bob Ruby 404-252-8888 or hikingchair@bmta.org

November 7, 8, 9 - ANNUAL MEETING WEEKEND Dinner and Meeting Saturday evening, November 8. Mail in your reservation form and check. Sign up for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday hikes with leaders (see page one).



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