



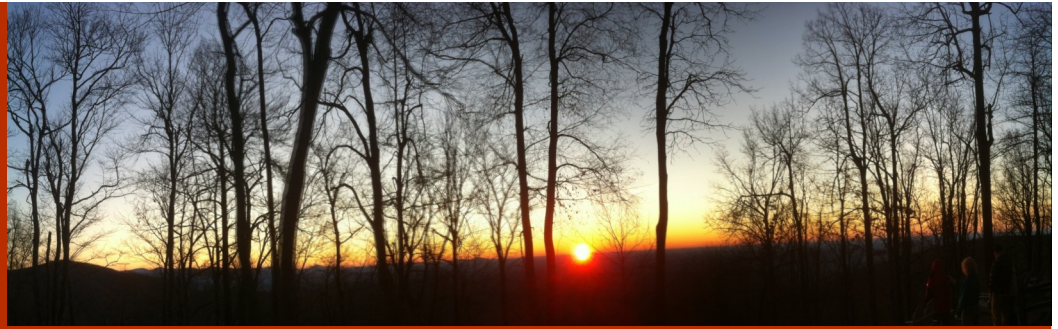
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Sunrise Photo at the Hike Inn by: Ralph Heller



VOLUME 29, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 28, 2012

New BMT Maintainer Shirts.....

Ralph Heller and Tom Keene awarded the new Maintainer Shirts to members at the Georgia January Workday. Congratulations to all members that have received or will be receiving their shirts. Members receiving shirts have accumulated more than 30 hours for this past year, travel plus work time. Richard Harris was instrumental in having the shirts made and Ernest Engman provided the design. Thank you all for your hard work



...Pictured here with their shirts...
 Ralph Heller, George Owen, and Walter Cook.

Phyllis and Ken Are Getting Married and We're Invited (See Page 13)

December Georgia Work Trip Sets 2011 Record

By George Owen, Trip Leader

Twenty-one stalwart folks turned out for a year's record-breaking work trip in numbers in the Peach State on December 10. This beats the previous record of 19 in November. All were great workers too.

The occasion? It was our second work trip on the relocation northward from No-Name Gap to the ridge summit. We completed two switchback sections, and now the long third one to the summit awaits our spring 2012 efforts. Congratulations and thanks to all these hearty folks who can now claim to have done Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) new construction, each calling some of the trail, in effect, "mine, by my hand!"

A bunch of us first met as usual at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge, most for breakfast. Then we met others as we traveled the distance to the work site, several at Three Forks and also Hickory Flats Cemetery. We could drive by Forest Service Road all the way to the trail atop the mountain meadow BMT crossing just ½ mile south of our work area.

It certainly was a good thing that Tom Keene brought most of our tools from the BMTA headquarters, because we used almost all of them. As usual, our great tool maintainer Tom Mitchell had them all ready and sharpened from our November trip to this same spot. So after the long haul on both paved and gravel roads, by mid morning we were out in the cool and yet pleasant air, ready for a few hours of clearing brush and limbs, and then sidehilling.

The upper part of the second switchback was full of brush and small trees, giving us fits with roots. This is probably the hardest part of the whole planned reroute. By mid-afternoon we had reached the second crossing of the old BMT and beyond. Thus around 2:30



we called it quits, pumped up the long uphill to our waiting vehicles. It was a long drive from there out to the pavement north of Doublehead Gap. A small handful of us upheld tradition: an after-work trip to the Pink Pig for a hearty meal.

Since the last several miles of gravel road into our work site are closed for the winter each year by the Forest Service, we will await spring to complete this project.

Meanwhile, my own and our club's resounding big "THANK YOU OH SO MUCH!!" goes out to all who made this trip and did so much to move this relocation toward completion.

My special thanks also go to Walt Cook for orienting newcomers to trail building techniques and tools in both November and this trip.

GREAT TRAIL BUILDERS: Tommy Barrow, Connor Bayliss, Steve Bayliss, David Blount, Gary Bryant, Walter Cook, Vic Fredlund, Ralph Heller, Bill Jencius, Tom Keene, David Maddox, Tom Mitchell, Michael O'Brian, George Owen, Mike Pilvinsky, Denny Rhodes, Richard Sullivan, Diana Winter, Mark Winter, John Zardis, Zoe Zardis

TOTAL HOURS WORKED: 105
TOTAL HOURS TRAVELED: 93.75
TOTAL TIME: 198.75



**This year's
Annual Walk-
thru is March
31st. Claim
Your Section
Now for this
Year's Event!
Details can be
found on the
Annual Walk-
Thru page
found at
www.bmta.org**

Taking Care of Business...on the Trail

By Laura Nix

My earliest memories of hiking and camping are less than glorious. When I met my husband over 12 years ago, his yen for all things outdoors worried me at first. I immediately recalled my last nature trek (5 years earlier) which consisted of a hike in the rain wearing Keds only to sleep in a leaky tent with no rain fly and then attempt to start a fire at midnight because it was part of the 'experience.' The guide on this torturous quest was knowledgeable but not prepared and that left a negative imprint on my brain that my husband would have to work hard to change.

I am happy to say that Gene's diligent attention to detail and ability to anticipate needs has made camping and hiking an event I look forward



to rather than dread. He is always ready for inclement weather and checks with all parties to make sure that the pace and destination are agreed upon by all. Our family trips are fun and memorable.

Of course, there is always an occasional mix-up. Prior to a trip to the Ocoee river a few weeks ago, Gene assured me that he packed plenty of toilet paper (this is the second question I ask right after determining adequate food supply) and even showed me the blue bag designated for toilet paper bulging at the seams. I was satisfied.

As soon as we stepped out of the car to cross over the river and begin our river-front hike, I needed to take care of things having drunk tea and water on the trip up. Blue bag in tow, I found a secluded area to address the need and opened the blue bag. After removing a child's green raincoat, I dug around to see if perhaps the paper was shoved deep into a corner pocket. It was not. I immediately pondered my options and decided on one, thankful that I was not born prior to the invention and widespread availability of toilet tissue.

Needless to say, Gene is more likely to forget his own boots than make that mistake again. Toilet paper is checked, rechecked and verified by a non-partisan third party before we set out on the trail. So if anyone has a funny story about finding yourself in need of essentials on the trail, please send them to the editor for consideration. Furthermore, make sure you always bring chocolate and toilet paper if a lady is part of your team.

The SPOT.....By Gene Nix



Connected By Bluetooth



I was browsing through some old pictures taken on a hiking trip with my boys in the late 80's, and was amazed at the gear I was using compared to my gear today. I noticed a Coleman's white gas stove and a large iron skillet. In the background was my Kelty three man tent that weighted in at a healthy 12 pounds. I carried everything in an external frame pack that must have weighted as much as all my gear today. I carried a 9 mm Ruger with a 15 round clip of ammunition along with Rambo knives, hatchets, shovels, canned foods, WWII canteens, and several changes of clothes. I must have carried over 75 pounds in the day. Of course, those days were days of youth, strength, and a major overload of testosterone. Today, my gear consists of materials I can't pronounce much less spell. My total weight is rarely over 25 pounds and the heaviest items I carry would be my water bottles.

Technology is ever-changing. It affects our lives daily and most certainly affects our choice of hiking gear. The baby boomers are retiring in record numbers and many of us want to continue the life style we had throughout our working lives. However, with body parts failing and things that just stop working, we must rely on many of the new technologies that are emerging in the hiking world to continue our hobby. One of these technologies is the SPOT, Satellite Positioning and Tracking, device. The SPOT is a device that can notify authorities when you are in need of help, giving them your exact location. This could be needed due to anything from a medical emergency to being lost. Unlike a cell phone, the SPOT, uses satellite technology and can be used in any location worldwide. It is weather resistant, shock resistant, and is simple enough to be used by an 8 year old and even by a 56 year old. I have owned a SPOT for two years. I have used it while hiking the AT, BMT, and all trails in between. I have used it on road trips as well as sailing trips to the Bahamas. I take it with me whenever I think I might be out of cell phone range. Much of my hiking is solo and those hikes that are not, are with my two sons. John, my 8 year old, can operate the SPOT and is very proficient at using it. Not only can I notify 911 in case of an emergency, I can also send messages to my wife letting her know my location and that all is well. I often use it to let my wife know to pick me up after a hike when I didn't leave a shuttle vehicle.

I have seen the SPOT ranges in price from \$169.00 to \$99.00. I purchased mine for \$149.00 at Mountain Outfitters here in Ellijay. After the purchase, you are required to pay yearly SPOT membership fees for their messaging service. The services range in price according to the services you sign up for and the various equipment and add-ons you have. They even have services which will connect your iPhone to the "SPOT" device to allow you to send custom text messages. My service fee is \$99.95 a year which includes 911 service, a general help alert that is sent to family only, and two difference types of non emergency messages I can send to my family. I highly recommend the "SPOT" and would now feel vulnerable if I hiked without it.

Click on the SPOT to check out their equipment, service plans, and prices.



THE AUSTRALIAN...by T. O. Mitchell



"He was soaking wet, looking not unlike a drowned duck, studying a trail guide".

He was soaking wet, looking not unlike a drowned duck, water dripping everywhere, his soaked back pack on the floor beside him, and looking at, studying actually, what appeared to be a trail guide. It was about 10:00 am in the Blue Ridge McDonalds, and it had been raining virtually unceasingly for the past week. But the trail guide looked somewhat familiar. I ventured closer. "Excuse me, but that wouldn't possibly be a Benton MacKaye trail guide, would it?" It was, as his decidedly Australian accent confirmed. He had been in the rain for the whole week, had surfaced where the trail crossed Hwy 60 just north of Suches, with only a little over 17 miles to go to Springer. But enough was enough, and he caught a ride into Blue Ridge, looking for a hot cup of coffee and a dry motel room. Interesting. "What," I asked, "brings an Australian to the Benton MacKaye trail?" "Well", he answered "it's part of the 15,000 miles I am hiking in North America."



"Say what?"

Fifteen thousand miles, he said. Thirty states, four provinces and 35 pair of shoes. Or twelve long walks, as he called it. Exploring North America's Natural Wonders on foot, as his web site says.

It rained all that day, and snowed the next. Which gave me the wonderful opportunity of having Cameron (Cam) Hanan wait the bad weather out as a guest in my house. He has hiked every continent, dozens of countries, been bitten by rabid dogs, robbed by masked bandits, frozen in the snows and burned in the deserts. He has already hiked Alaska, Canada, the Pacific Crest Trail, is currently in Florida, will come back through here on The Appalachian Trail, then do the Continental Divide Trail, and more. But here is where I need to let Cam start speaking for himself, via his web sites, www.thehikinglife.com and www.thehikinglife.com/journal. Not only does he have pictures and descriptions of his many hikes, divided by continents and countries, his web site contains tremendous amounts of information divided into categories such as Hikes, Planning, Gear, Going Lite, Skills, Health and Safety, the Developing World, Environment, and more. Go there. Read. Learn. Be amazed. There are people who actually do things that us mere mortals just dream about.

And when he returns this way, sometime in the spring perhaps, it is my hope that he will honor me with another stay as my guest, and perhaps have a chance to meet some other Benton MacKayers, and regal us with his wonderful stories.

The invitation is out there.



President's Column... Dick Evans

Happy 2012, and I hope you all have a great hiking year!

As you will see elsewhere in the Newsletter, we have changed the date of the Annual Walk-Thursdays from March 17th to March 31st. Normally, we don't try to "deconflict" every date, but this one is a special date. Ken Jones has been responsible for construction of more of the Benton MacKaye Trail than anyone else I can think of, and virtually the entire Board of Directors wants to attend his wedding to Phyllis Loman on that date. We are all excited for both of them, and we all wanted to share their special ceremony. Ken and Phyllis-our best wishes for a long and happy future!

Two other reminders: First, the "Train the Maintainers" Session. Again, the article elsewhere explains the concept, but I hope that as many maintainers and potential maintainers can join us for that date.

We hope this is the first in an annual series to make sure that our volunteers have the information and knowledge to maximize their efforts. Remember to register!

Second, remember to sign up for a section or two for the Annual Walk thru on March 31st. Go to the Website and let the Maintenance Directors know your choice. We have redesigned the reporting form a bit to gather more information about trail signage and other issues. Be sure to download the form on the page and give us the data to help plan our maintaining efforts.

One last thing-annually, we have a formal meeting with our Federal Land Manager Partners. We discuss Trail-wide concerns and



coordination issues. This year, we are holding the meeting on February 24th at the Sisson cabin in Blue Ridge. We plan on having a chili lunch before the meeting, and it is open to everyone. Everyone plan on getting to the cabin about 11 AM. We do have a foul weather plan in case February throws us a curve. If the meeting is delayed, I will try to get a note on the Facebook page and the Website. Please try to attend and meet many of the US Forest Service professionals who help guide the development of the Trail. It looks unlikely that our National Park Service Partners will be able to attend, but they will be there in spirit.

Even though it is winter, try to get out and hike a bit this coming month. Winter hiking can be very rewarding, and the Benton MacKaye Trail is a "year-round" trail!

See you on the Trail.

Dick

If any of you readers have trail stories, gear advice, funny stories, or just a memorable trip you would like to see published in the Newsletter, please email them to

Editor@bnta.org



Georgia Workday... January 14th

By Tom Keene

Fifteen hearty souls showed up for the January Georgia work trip despite eighteen degree temperatures at breakfast. Happily our trailhead meeting place was the Sisson pavilion, so we could let the day warm up a bit while we got organized.

The day warmed up nicely and we got a tremendous amount done, refreshing sidehilling and adding or replacing cribbing in four different places between the shelter and GA 515/ US 76. As a bonus, seven of the dauntless crew were able to stay on for hot bowl (or two!) of Jane Keene's famous veggie chowder.



Special thanks to first-timers Michael O'Brian and Tom Sillock. Major thanks also to the rest of the fabulous fifteen: Debbie Tuten, Margaret Meadows, Claire Broadwell, Walt Cook, Ralph Heller, Gene Nix, Richard Sullivan, Connor Bayliss, Steven Bayliss, Bill Hamrick, and Gerritt Voogt. And, of course, to Jane Keene, the veritable Empress of Veggie Chowder.



January
Georgia
Work-trip
Fifteen
(15) for
Eighteen
(18)
"Get It ?"

A chainsaw workshop is being offered by Forest Applications Training on February 16-17 and March 6-8. Classes will be held at Berry College. Contact information is below.

To register contact us by phone (770-543-9862) or by Email to info@ForestApps.com (www.forestapps.com)

Renee Wrest Completes Thru Hike.....

By Gene Nix

Renee Wrest completed her thru hike of the Benton MacKaye on October 20 of last year. The Benton MacKaye Trail Association congratulates her on her accomplishments and is proud to add her to our 300 miler list. I had asked Renee to give us a little information about herself and her thru hike. The next few paragraphs are from Renee. You can view her trail journal at <http://www.trailjournals.com/entry.cfm?id=355539>.

I am originally from California but have lived most of my life in Missouri. I grew up primarily in St. Louis where I earned a BA in Anthropology and an MA in American History. I eventually attended library school at Indiana University Bloomington and worked as a Librarian in Cincinnati, Ohio for a number of years. Cubicles, however, are not my thing so I semi-retired early, moved to Springfield, Missouri and now work part time at the Cox Medical Center. This job allows me the time to go on long walks!

I started backpacking in high school but school, work and other responsibilities took precedence during my 20s and 30s. After moving to Springfield I decided to start backpacking again and now trails are my passion! I started going out to the Appalachian Trail just about every year and as the years went by my equipment got lighter and I felt more confident. Not so confident, however, that I would tackle a remote trail like the BMT myself. So when my friend Rick asked me if I wanted to accompany him on this trip I said yes! Rick was interested in this trail because his son works in one of the Forest Districts that the BMT crosses.

Rick and I met through our mutual involvement in the Ozark Trail Association. We started going out on local trails together including the Ozark Highlands Trail, Ozark Trail and the Ouachita Trail. We have a similar hiking pace and style and we are both "semi" lightweight backpackers. I am currently the Adopt A Trail Coordinator for the Ozark Trail Association and a trail maintainer/builder as well. Like the BMT, our organization is fairly young and the Ozark Trail is still under development.

I've discovered that going out on new and less popular trails is a lot of fun. On our trip someone pointed out how exciting it was to be one of the first BMT thru-hikers and that thought lifted my spirits immensely! My favorite part of the BMT was Big Frog Mountain and my least favorite the road walks. I really enjoyed Thunder Rock Campground and stopping at Webb Brothers store. People on the trail were very nice and positive about our trip.

Rick and I have plans to thru-hike the River to River Trail in Illinois in April and I might join him on the Superior Hiking/Border Route/Kekekabic Trails in the Fall. I've also become interested in the Bartram Trail and I would like to return to the Long Trail in the near future. I have done a section of that one but would really like to make it to the Canadian border next time. I also hope to hike in France this summer, perhaps on the Robert Louis Stevenson Trail. I just love walking and exploring the world on foot!



CoTrails – A Collaborative Trails Project

By Ralph Heller

There is a unique effort in progress, spearheaded by the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (CONF), to harness the resources of trail users to identify and maintain a diverse, quality trail system on the Forests. This effort, being the first of its kind, has the potential to be a model for recreational forest systems throughout the country.



In 2011 the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forests conducted meetings at various locations near the Forests to find out what trail users wanted happen to improve the trail system and find out how these users could work together with the Forest Service. The original name of this forum was Recreation Trails Collaborative Management Project subsequently renamed **CoTrails**. More than 350 persons attended these meetings. The largest attendance was in Blue Ridge. Trail users include cyclists, horsemen, hunters fishermen, off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, and hikers

As a result of public input from these meeting, a list of desired accomplishments was created. Further meetings of a core group of volunteers were scheduled with the Forest Service in Gainesville. At the first meeting, per plan, attendees joined one of four groups, **Resource Planning, Public Education, Communication, and Volunteer Coordination**. On subsequent meetings in Gainesville and with numerous conference calls, these four groups created the foundation for a master plan with a list of action items. Representatives from each of these groups were selected to form a smaller steering committee to coalesce the ideas from the four larger groups to form a strategic plan.

As a result, the plan covers 5 Strategic Objectives.

1. **Engage Volunteer Organizations, their Members and Other Trail Users in the Collaborative Trails Initiative & CoTrails Projects**
 2. **Conduct Professional Assessment of Selected CONF System Trails**
 3. **Create CONF Forest-wide Interactive Digital Map of system Trails**
 4. **Identify and Assess Unauthorized Trails and routes in the CONF**
- Identify and Propose New Trails in the Under-served Areas of CONF**

Each objective includes action items, expected results, a time line, and assigns responsible organizations.

Now that the strategic plan has been approved, the CoTrails initiative is ready for it's "Boots on the Ground" stage. The plan will be launched with a weekend of training for volunteers. This will includes a "Trails 101" workshop and field training on techniques and criteria for volunteers to understand and help with trail assessment. A contractor has been hired to do this training. The same contractor has been selected to perform professional assessments on over 200 miles of trails in OCNF. Trails such as the GATC and BMTA are considered to be well maintained and will not be part of this assessment. Unfortunately, this three-day event has been scheduled on January 20-22, the same weekend as our board meeting. There will be many more volunteer opportunities for activities devoted to carrying out the master plan, including more training. Stay tuned.

For detailed information on CoTrails, meetings, the Master Plan and Strategic Objectives go to

<http://cotrails.org/>



BMTA Training For Maintaining Seminar

By Ralph Heller

For everyone interested in learning about the finer points of trail building and maintenance, the BMTA is offering a Training For Maintaining seminar on Saturday March 10. All BMTA members are invited to attend, but we strongly encourage our section maintainers and those folks who have considered adopting a section to attend this one-day event. Lunch will be provided by BMTA.

Many of us have learned bits and pieces about trail maintenance on work trips, but here is a chance to really learn from the pros. It will be our chance to discuss and reinforce the standards that we have established for our trail maintenance. We desire to teach these standards, so that the trail will be consistently maintained to a high standard along its total length.

The training will be located at the Ocoee Whitewater Center Conference Room and is scheduled to start at 9:00 AM. Topics to be covered are:

- USFS Trail Design Standards/Trail Parameters/Usage Classifications
- Personal Protective Equipment and Tailgate Safety Briefings
- Job Hazards and Mitigation/JHA's
- Annual Walk-thru/Trail Condition Reporting
- Monthly Work Trip Info
- Available Tools and Safe Usage
- Injury Reporting & Workers Compensation
- * CPR First Aid Course – Basic CPR First Aid Certification

** Trail Building Skills. Trail design principles, terminology, corridor clearing standards for BMTA, water mitigation (grade reversals, knicks, rolling grade dips, water-bars, and switchbacks) and other topics.

Please strongly consider attending this seminar. Members will be receiving an email shortly informing them of this event and requesting that a reservation be sent, in order to get an accurate attendance count. Please promptly respond if you desire to attend. In the meantime, you can contact me if you plan to attend.

*The CPR/First Aid course offered will result in certification for those who pass the course. This certification is required for those folks who desire a chainsaw or cross cut saw certification or recertification and will be offered free. We also desire that work trip leaders and hike leaders have this certification. Enrollment for this course is limited. This course will take about 4 hours.

** Everyone attending the seminar will be receiving a free copy of the *Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook*.



BMTA Maintenance Coordinator for the Smokies: Ernest Engman

By Marge Heller

Board Member Ernest Engman joined the BMTA in 2005 and is a maintainer for Section 19B in the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock area. After retiring from the Army in 2008, he hiked the entire Benton MacKaye Trail. Later he wrote a publication aimed at the long distance BMT hiker. **Benton MacKaye Trail Thru-Hikers' Guide** has been in publication since 2010. Ernest, aka Sgt. Rock, and his family reside in Maryville, TN.



BTMA Treasurer: Kim Hainge

Board Member Kim Hainge is an entomologist, public speaker, writer, native plants expert and pest control consultant. She lives in the Beech Creek community of Robbinsville, NC, with her husband, Jim, who is both a botanist and an Commander in the U.S. Navy. Her home is located on land designated as a United Plant Saver's Plant Sanctuary. Kim began backpacking in her late teens and has always delighted in wandering in the woods.



Editor's Note: Look for more BMTA Board Members to be featured in upcoming Newsletters. It's a great way to get to know your Board.

BMTA Welcomes New Members

Stuart Miles

Larry LaPierre

Julia Windsor

David Chamberlain

Thomas Barrow

Marian Jones

Vicki McKee

Tim Bridges

Marion & Martha Whitworth

Barry Millsaps

Cecilia Andres Gregg

Arthur Meyer

Robert Olive

Asheville, NC

Ellijay, GA

Douglasville, GA

Smyrna, GA

Marretta, GA

Cherry Log, GA

Wimauma, FL

Calhoun, TN

Ellijay, GA

Central, SC

Summerfield, NC

Braxton, MS

Cumming, GA

Board of Directors Meeting...

By Gene Nix

The first Board Meeting of the New Year took place at the home of Ralph and Marge Heller in Cherry Log, GA. The meeting started at 9:00 AM and adjourned at 2:30 PM. Old and new business was addressed as well as board members committee reports. Lunch was provided by Marge Heller and Sara Bland. Board members present were Dick Evans, David Blount, Sara Bland, Bill Hodge, Tom Keene, Rick Harris, Ernie Engman, Gene Nix, Vic Fredlund, Marge Heller, Bob Ruby, Hobson Kendall, Ralph Heller, Terry Miller.



Phyllis and Ken Are Getting Married and We're Invited



Some things are meant to be.....

*Because you have shared in
our lives by your friendship and love, we*

*Ken Jones
&
Phyllis Loman*

*invite you to share the
beginning of our new life
together when we exchange
marriage vows.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 2012
VOGEL STATE PARK, GEORGIA
2 PM
Reception to follow

Please RSVP by February 15, 2012
e-mail: mcpatrick@windstream.net
phone: 706-379-4170

***No gifts, please.** Your presence is your gift to us.

Directions and information for Vogel State Park – www.gastateparks.org/vogel

Cabins and campsites are available in the Park. The reservation number is 800-864-7275 or online at www.gastateparks.org. There is a two-night minimum. The per night rates are as follows:

Efficiency – Sleeps 2 (cottages 10, 15, 17, 19) \$95/night
 1 Bedroom – Sleeps 4 (cottages 2,6,12, 16,18)\$105/night
 1 Bedroom (Log Cabins) – Sleeps 4 (cabins 31-36) \$115/night
 2 Bedroom – Sleeps 6 (cottages 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 20) \$120/night
 2 Bedroom – Sleeps 8 (cottages 21-24, 26, 28-30) \$135/night
 3 Bedroom – Sleeps 10 (cottages 25 & 27) \$150/night
 These prices exclude a hotel tax of 5% & sales tax of 7%

Cottages are furnished with an electric stove, microwave, toaster, refrigerator, pots and pans, utensils, dishes and coffee maker. One set of linens and towels is provided per person for the duration of the stay. The cottages all have electric heat and air, as well as fireplaces. The Park sells firewood.

What to bring: Dishwashing liquid, paper towels, coffee filters, groceries, & entertainment. There are no telephones or televisions in cottages.