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|---------------------|---------------|
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Suspension Bridge
over the Toccoa River:
By Ralph Heller



VOLUME 29, ISSUE 6

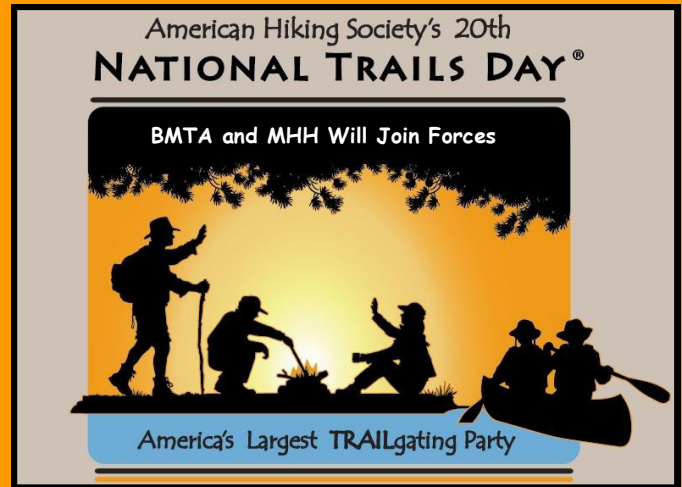
JUNE 30, 2012

National Trails Day Event

By Darcy Douglas

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association and the Mountain High Hikers joined forces to celebrate National Trails Day on June 2, 2012. National Trails Day was designed by the American Hiking Society some years ago to promote trails across America and to encourage our countrymen, women, and children to get outdoors and hike!

George Owen and Richard Sullivan led our intrepid group on a lovely hike through the Black Rock Mountain State Park in Georgia along the Tennessee Rock Trail. They kindly arranged to have some beautiful flowers available for viewing, including Digitalis Purpurea, the common name for which is foxglove. A swath of tornado damage from last year was quite dramatic! We stopped for a photo opportunity at the Tennessee Rock Overlook where a plaque in the shape of the state of Georgia was erected. The elevation of Black Rock Mountain here is 3640.



Continued On Next Page

National Trails Day Event



Since food seems to be an integral part of most people's lives, we decided to have a pot luck lunch after our hike. Because so many of us are having discussions with doctors about cholesterol, issues with hearts, etc, the food which was presented wasn't your typical pasta salad and deviled eggs! There were refreshing surprises with a healthful focus – LOTS of fruits and vegetables, wholesome breads, and more. Eating like this supports our love of hiking and the outdoors and will help us stick around to enjoy our pursuits! Thanks, everyone!

Thanks to Pam and Candy of the MHH (and BMTA) for most of the planning of the event, to Dick for bringing the store and for his presentation, to Denny for sharing about monitoring water (and needing volunteers), to George for sharing about National Trails Day and leading the hike, to Richard for serving as sweep, and to Joe and Candy for photos! Thanks to the rest of you, too – without participants, all this work is for naught.

Participants, in order of signing up: Claire Broadwell, Richard Sullivan, Denny and Lois Rhodes, George Owen, Sheri Stewart, Jane Bohannan, Joe Robison, Darlene Rothenay, Mary Palreck, Frank Maloney, Frank Retter, Nancy and Steve Dennison, Pam Sullivan, Candy Retter, Michelle Maloney, Rebecca Levings, Darcy Douglas, Dick Evans, Jeanne Matheny, Kendall and Kathy Hobson, Margaret Evans, Nancy Shofner.



[Click For More Pictures of Trail Day](#)

My Side of the Campfire, by Dick Evans



I hope everyone has great Fourth of July Plans including at least a short hike! Everything is in full leaf, and the deep woods can be surprisingly cool, especially in the rhododendron thickets, which are in full bloom on the northern part of the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Although the Annual Meeting in November seems a long time off, it is time to start the nominations process. I have appointed David Blount, Ralph Heller, Ernie Engman and Vic Fredlund as the Nominating Committee, as specified in the By-laws. We have a pretty large Board of Directors, and there are plenty of opportunities for you to volunteer with the administrative work of the Association as well as the Trail Maintaining emphasis. The Board typically meets four times a year, and the next Board Meeting is on July 21st. All Members are welcome at any Board Meetings. At this point, we have not determined the exact location of the meeting, but it will be in the Blue Ridge-Ellijay area on that Saturday. If you would like to attend, just drop a line to "President@bmta.org" and I will get you the exact time and place. We try very hard to limit the meeting to no more than three hours. That would give you a chance to see a different side of the BMTA and help decide if serving on the Board is something you might like. In addition, if you would like to volunteer for the Board, but can't attend this meeting, just drop a note to "President@bmta.org" and we'll get your note to the Committee.



In addition, although not part of the Board, we are looking for someone in the Blue Ridge-Ellijay area to take over the BMTA Store. It does require a fair amount of computer experience. The main functions are downloading the orders, then filling and shipping those orders. Since we just expanded the BMTA Store, it is hard to estimate time requirement, but I would guess that 2-3 hours a week would be more than adequate. If you are interested, drop me a note at "President@bmta.org" and I would be glad to discuss the position. It would be great for someone with a little space in their home and a little time on their hands.

Hope everyone has a great Holiday and summer!

See you on the Trail.

Dick

BRAVO! No-Name Gap Relocation Opened



By George Owen, Trip Leader

That relocation of the BMT at No-Name Gap north of Three Forks was opened about 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 9, by a work crew of nine. This completes several months of work trips since late last year to accomplish this goal.



As usual, the day started off with some meeting at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge for breakfast, then a couple others joining us at Three Forks for the last several miles' ride. We parked at the wildlife meadow just south of No-Name Gap, hiked in the last bit, and began work.

We rejoiced to have three new workers who had never been on a regular Saturday work trip before: new members Steve Davis and Brian Trinkle and guest Hank Baudet. It was also great to have Doug Kleiber back with us after many months away due to work and family illness.

We began work just below the last switchback turn, then we labored hard for several hours to open the trail. Even before arriving at the ridge summit to open the last yards of trail, we had a backpacker heading south along that ridge who heard our noise, saw the marking flags, and decided to break through a few yards of bush, greet us, and be the first to walk down the entire newly relocated trail. (Only the lower third had been opened to hikers previously.)

In making this opening for hiker use we chose to dig trail a bit shallow a few places and not put in all the little drainage dips. A small crew is being recruited as this is written in mid-June to go back up there and complete the work omitted and paint the blazes. The trail is certainly safe for travel now, however.

During the hour between 2 and 3 p.m. we did some finishing work, and several piled logs and trimmings on the old trail route at crossings to prevent travel there. During this time Bob Ruby traversed the entire new section with his GPS and determined initially that the relocation is about 0.4 mile longer than the old steep and eroded route straight up the hill.

By just before 3 p.m we headed uphill toward the meadow and vehicles. Here the high grass covered the meadow trail route; with my big weed eater the trail there was reopened. Only Claire Broadwell and I did the usual dinner afterwards at the Pink Pig.

My thanks, and I'm sure the thanks of all within the BMTA and the future hikers of this section, go out to these June 9 workers and those on the previous trips who made this fine relocation possible.

WORK CREW: Hank Baudet, David Blount, Claire Broadwell, Steve Davis, Doug Kleiber, George Owen, Bob Ruby, Gilbert Treadwell, Brian Trinkle

HOURS WORKED: 46.5

HOURS TRAVELED: 32.5

Blue Ridge Arts In The Parks...2012



By Marge Heller

It was another successful Arts in the Park weekend in spite of 90 degree temperatures. Lots of interested people stopped by our display. We sold our Trail Guides, received donations and were able to share lots of information on the Benton MacKaye Trail. We met some great folks who like to hike and also some who are wanting to get involved in trail maintenance. In addition, we signed up three new members: Tim Mulroy & Family, Adam Shields and Will Irvin & Family. Patty & Marshall Smitherman renewed their membership.



Tom Mitchell, BMTA Tool Maintainer



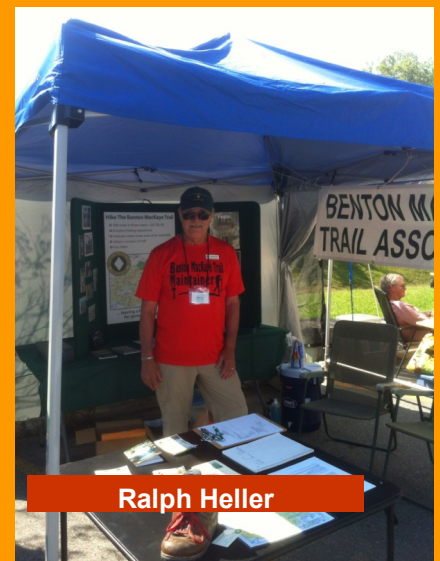
Mark & Kathy Yost

Current members who volunteered their time and talent to the BMTA Booth were: Travis & Shirley Crouch of North Georgia Mountain Outfitters, Ralph & Marge Heller, Tom Mitchell, Gene Nix and Mark & Kathy Yost. Mark & Kathy Yost helped the Heller's for both days and we were most thankful to them for our break from the heat. We met the Yost's at Arts in the Park 2011. Now Mark is a certified sawyer and has spent many hours on the BMT clearing fallen trees. Also, he and Kathy maintain Section 2c, Bryson Gap to the Toccoa River Suspension Bridge.



The Blue Ridge "Spring Arts in the Park", is held each Memorial Day Weekend and the "Fall Arts in the Park" is held the second weekend in October.

Arts In The Park Features over 200 juried art, craft and food booths. The best in mountain crafts and fine art, artists demonstrations, music and dance. It is recognized as one of the Top 20 Events by the Southeastern Tourism Society.



Ralph Heller

Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition



Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition

P.O. Box 1492 • Hayesville, North Carolina 28904

TO: Trail Maintenance & Hiking Club Release

ITEM: Article below on Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition Region Meeting Sept. 20-23, 2012

RELEASE DATE FOR PUBLICATION: Immediately, especially anytime before mid-July, 2012

Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition Invites

Your Club Members to Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau Gathering in September

Members of the 40 hiking and trail maintenance clubs in the Southeast interested in hiking the trails on the Cumberland Plateau or wanting to know more about all aspects of trails and trail building/maintenance are invited to the 7th biennial meeting of the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC) at Fall Creek Falls State Park in southeastern Tennessee near Pikeville on the Cumberland Plateau on September 20-23, 2012, about 70 miles north of Chattanooga.

The SEFTC is a coalition of most all the hiking and trail maintenance organizations in the Southeast, representing over 40 such clubs from Florida to Virginia and Kentucky.

The coalition leadership has planned a fun and informative four days. There will be numerous trail-related workshops led by experts in the field. A variety of hikes are planned, both inside this 25,000-acre state park and in the surrounding state/protected areas of the Cumberland Plateau. Trail fellowship and a wide exchange of ideas are part of the offering. Special speakers and entertainment will be yours each evening.

Much of the beautiful lakeview lodge, cabins, and campground have been reserved by SEFTC for this weekend. Part-weekend registration and attendance is available for those not able to be present the full time.

Early registration now is encouraged. Some fees go up August 1, and there is a limit to housing with almost no alternatives nearby outside the park.

Go to website www.southeastfoottrails.org to learn more about the conference and for the registration form. The website provides the basic information with links to the pages for registration, housing, meals, workshops, and hikes.

Provided By Darcy Douglas

Not On The Trail, But...

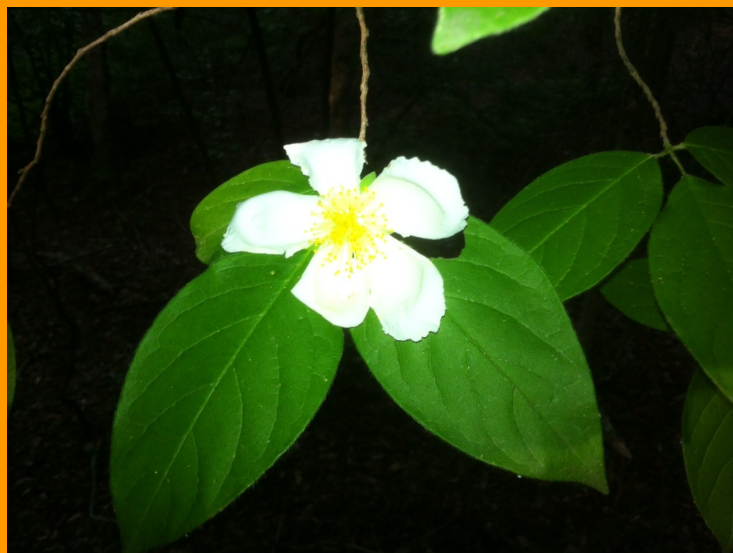


By Ralph Heller

The flower shown in the picture was from a tree not located on the Benton MacKaye Trail. I found it in the woods near my house in Cherry Log. However, that's not to say that none exist along the trail. Does anyone recognize this plant? I could not find it in my usual plant and tree identification books. Before I tell you what it is, Walt Cook, one of our members and retired UGA Forestry Professor came to the rescue. He remembers seeing and identifying this tree before, over in the Chattooga River area. With his identification, I looked up on the Internet and he was spot on. Before I tell you what is, I will describe it more fully with the help of internet information.

It is a small rare tree, native to the southern Appalachian area. This tree is deciduous and can better survive the cold winters than its Asian cousin. It has been classified by Nature Serve as Imperiled in NC, SC, and VA and is Vulnerable in GA.

This tree blooms later than most native plants. This one was blooming in late June. The flower has 5 waxy petals, is about 3 inches wide, and has yellow stamens. The blossoms are surrounded by 3 oval shaped leaves. Seen from a distance they look like dogwood trees, but the season is not right for dogwoods in blossom. The leaves turn red or yellow in the fall before they drop. In the wild, these shrublike trees seldom grow over 20 ft. tall and are found in the forest understory or along streams. Their seeds capsules are about 1 inch long and can hang on the branches through the winter. These trees are difficult to find in a plant nursery and are difficult to grow.



Give up?

This rare specimen is called **Mountain Camellia (*Stewartia ovata*)**.

Anyone else have an article on interesting flora or fauna? Submit it to editor@bmta.org

BMTA RECIEVES DONATION OF TOOLS



By David Blount

For the second year in a row, the Benton Mackaye Trail Association is the beneficiary of a generous donation of trail tools. The items include a chainsaw, a crosscut saw, a “nuclear” weed eater, related safety gear and other hand tools and supplies. The benefactor, Eric Eades, is a long time member who is battling some health issues which preclude him performing trail work at present. Additionally, he and his family have recently moved to the coast of Georgia, making access to the BMT difficult at best.

Eric has been an active board member of the BMTA in the recent past. In one of his roles, he served for a period as the Tennessee Maintenance Director, commuting from Dalton, Georgia to do so. Eric epitomizes the spirit of giving which is so common within the members of the BMTA. Thank you Eric for the gift of tools and service, know that the tools will be put to good use, and that we are all pulling for you on your path back to full health.



Easy Trek Hike: SUSPENSION BRIDGE OVER TOCCOA

By Sara Bland

On a beautiful Wednesday morning, May 23, 2012, fourteen Easy Trekkers gathered in the Ingle's Parking Lot in Blue Ridge to head out to the Benton MacKaye and Duncan Ridge Trail from GA 60 leading to the suspension bridge. All were excited about seeing the much-talked-about 260-foot suspension bridge which spans the Toccoa River in the Chattahoochee National Forest - the longest swinging suspension bridge east of the Mississippi.

The scenery in route was peaceful with the rolling, green hills and pastures. Some spots reminded us of the epic beauty of New Zealand. It was a little bit of a trip, but we enjoyed the ride. We arrived at the trail head on GA 60 and claimed our place in the road-side parking area. Several cars traveled to the end of the gravel road to shuttle us back. We finally assembled at the trail head sign and began our trek.

The Trekkers appreciated the well-maintained trail (thanks to Walter Cook & Nancy Smith), the moderate climbs, and the shade trees leading to the river. The beautiful ingredient of these hikes is that everyone seems to have a great time conversing as we hike along...this hike was certainly no exception with lots of laughs and stories (some true and some maybe enhanced?).

We were fortunate to have George Owen along to share some behind-the-scene history of the building of the bridge. He brought light to the fascinating achievement in 1977 of the USDA Forest Service and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club. Also, we were delighted to have new BMTA hikers, Hank Boudet and Don Bray with us.

The anticipation grew as began hearing the sounds of the mighty Toccoa River. We were not disappointed! We reached our destination and all crossed the bridge with many exclamations of wonderment. What a site! Everyone claimed their log of choice and prepared to sit a spell in the forest glade along the river to have lunch. It is suspected that there may have been some short naps after the lunch...but one can blame it on the sounds of the beautiful, clear water of the Toccoa passing us by.

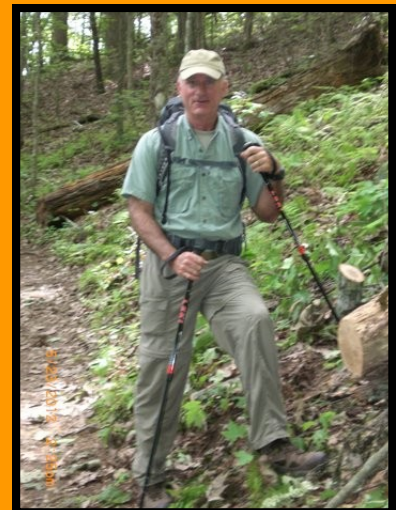
There is always some reluctance to conclude such an awesome day and head our separate ways. You think each hike couldn't get better, but it seems to. The remembrance of the comradeship and Marge's pictures will keep the spirit alive until the next one. Thanks to all who participated and especially to Marge and Ralph who helped Jerry and me "scope" the trail a week earlier.

In the meantime, happy trails to all.



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SUSPENSION BRIDGE OVER TOCCOA RIVER HIKE



CoTrails Update by Ralph Heller

The Benton MacKaye Trail maintenance needs are ongoing. It is a great feeling to know that the Forest Service is confident that we are able to keep our trail in good condition with minimum direction from their offices. However, there is a larger picture. There is now an effort to bring all the trails in the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest (CONF) up to higher standards. The BMTA's main objective is to continue to maintain our trail to high standards, and we need to have high member participation in our maintenance events. However, if your personal schedules conflict with our scheduled work trips, or you want to do even more, the CoTrails program is a great opportunity.



The CoTrails cooperative initiative between the Forest Service and the public reached a major milestone. On June 12 BMTA members George Owen, Richard Sullivan and I attended a CoTrails general meeting in Gainesville. George and Richard also represented Mountain High Hikers. The purpose of the meeting was to inform CoTrails participants of the completion of the first phase of the CoTrails master plan. Jeremy Wimpey of Applied Trails Research, professional trail evaluators, described the methods and criteria used to perform the assessment. This company was contracted to assess 200+ miles of the 450 + miles of trails in Oconee/Chattahoochee National Forest. The report for this completed assessment can be reviewed by going to <http://go.usa.gov/vcc>.

There are a lot of things happening at CoTrails. Rather than try and describe all of them in this newsletter, it is better to give the reader the web site. Go to **CoTrails.org** to see a continually updated description of all the activities taking place. If you are interested in participating in some of their activities or committees, this site gives you contact information.

The next stage of the master plan is to evaluate the rest of the trails in the system using CONF personnel and volunteers. That would be 250 miles on approximately 100 system trails. The FS is getting organized to work with the volunteers. Training for volunteers has already started and there will be more training scheduled. The CoTrails site gives information on training dates, locations and type of training. The training is free and very informative. Since the FS has limited resources, the only way this program is going to be successful is through a large number of well organized volunteers.

Continued On Next Page

CoTrails Update by Ralph Heller

Documents for the volunteer trail evaluation process can be found at the “Resources” tab in Co-Trails.org. These are:

1. Trail Evaluation Process Instructions
2. Volunteer Trail Evaluation Form
3. Trails list – the 250 miles of trails to be evaluated
4. Sample TMO – Trails Management Objective for Slaughter Creek Trail

Once the trails have been evaluated, they will need to be improved and maintained to the standards resulting from the evaluations. Work is already in progress on a Crew Leader Handbook. There will be Crew Leader Certification course offered in September.

As you can see a lot is happening in the CONF. It is also very important that the BMTA participates in this process. As a major and long established trail organization, we need to have a voice in the process to make sure that our trail is not negatively impacted by decisions resulting from the CoTrails program. If any BMTA members would like to participate in the CoTrails General Meeting in Gainesville as a BMTA representative, contact one of our Board members. The next meeting is August 7 at the USFS/CONF Supervisors Office.

Michelle Jones Is Reassigned ...

By Ralph Heller

Michelle Jones, District Ranger for the Chattahoochee National Forest, Conasauga District, has been reassigned to that same position in Oregon. Michelle will be District Ranger for the Central Coast Ranger District headquartered in Waldport Oregon. By the time you read this announcement, she will be on the job in her home state where she grew up and has family. Ralph Heller, George Owen and Butch Horn attended her going-away pot luck luncheon on June 8 held at the FS office in Chatsworth, GA. We will miss working with Michelle the past 5 ½ years and wish her the best at her new location. Michelle stated that she has had her eye on that position for some time and jumped at the opportunity, when it became open. The BMTA presented her with a framed certificate thanking her for her work with us during her tenure in Georgia.



Her replacement has not been named as yet, but the selection process has started.

BMTA Conservation...Betty Petty

Retired from TVA, Betty Petty is a Computer Programmer and Systems Analyst who currently resides in Ooltewah, TN. She is the widow of Bill Petty, a Methodist minister. She grew up in Monroe County, TN where her grandparents moved in 1910 from Robbinsville, NC. The 100 acres they sold there is now part of the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness and the proceeds from that sale were used to buy 100 acres of land from Bob Stratton in TN.



Loving the Cherokee National Forest since childhood,

she has been active in forest watch for many years with especial concentration on the Tellico Ranger District. When the construction began on the Benton MacKaye Trail in TN, she saw this as a positive development to help further protect the forest she loves.

In addition to working on the construction of the trail in TN and currently maintaining a section in the Tellico area, she has served on the BMTA board as Conservation Chair and President of the BMTA.

BMTA Immediate Past President - Ralph Heller

Having served as BMTA President in 2009-2010, Ralph is currently occupying the board position of Past President. Still staying busy, he is assisting the Georgia Maintenance Director by maintaining the trail work database which tracks hours worked and travel times for volunteers in Georgia and maintains Section 6d. He also is a BMTA representative for the newly formed CoTrails initiative with the Chatahoochee/Oconee National Forest and is a liaison for BMTA with Save Georgia's Hemlocks.



His formative years were spent growing up in western North Carolina, Brevard, where Ralph developed a love for the mountains and hiking. Serving in the Air Force, college, and a career working for National Airlines and Pan American Airlines in Miami, Florida kept him mostly away from the mountains. In 1991, he got the opportunity to join Delta Air Lines in Atlanta, where he finished his career in Flight Simulation. Retiring in 2005, Ralph moved to Cherry Log in the North Georgia Mountains and became more involved with BMTA activities.

Ralph's wife Marge is currently BMTA Publicity Director. They have two married daughters, and five granddaughters, all living in the Atlanta area. When not involved with BMTA activities, he is busy being a granddad. He also helps treat Hemlock Trees against the Woolly Adelgid infestation as a facilitator for Save Georgia's Hemlocks. In their spare time, he and Marge like to travel. Ralph also enjoys wood working and gardening, especially with native plants.

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

BMTA Store Expanded On-Line!

By Dick Evans....

After a lot of work, we have expanded the BMTA Store to put the entire selection of merchandise on-line. We had started with the Guide Books, Data Book, etc., but we now have patches, maps, tee shirts, hats and other items on-line.

The BMTA On-Line Store is on four pages. Page one is the Guide Books, Data Book, Sgt. Rock's Thru Hikers Guide and Tim Homan's Guide to the Trail. Page Two is brand new. We have added the NatGeo Trail Maps plus "Tinman's Strip Maps. In addition, we will have a wall map of the entire trail available very soon. Page Three is Patches, Rockers, and Bumper Stickers. Page Four is

clothing, including the new Tee Shirts shown in the photo. We have a Dark Green Polo (collared shirt), embroidered with the BMTA Logo and our Motto, "Leaving a footpath for generations to follow.", in addition to a Kelley Green Dry Weave Tee Shirt with the Logo as well as a Garnett (Dark Red) Tee Shirt with the classic BMT Art-work on the front, as well as the BMTA Hat. You can use your Credit Card or PayPal Account, or print out the Merchandise Order Form and send that with your check. Go to the Website and click on "BMTA Store" and take a look and let us know what you think. If you find something you like, everything is in stock except the Smokies Guide and the Wall Map. If you find something you don't like, buy one so we will run out faster!



Latest news from the National Park Service regarding Campsites, Shelters and Trails in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

There are currently NO campsites nor shelters closed due to bear activity.

There is bear activity at the following:

Campsites: 21, 24, 34, 35, 61, and 113.

Shelters: Derrick Knob, Russell Field, Cosby Knob

Trails: Laurel Falls, Abrams Falls, Bullhead

Other Information:

Gunter Fork Trail: Closed due to landslides

Beard Cane Trail: Closed due to tornado damage

Campsites 3 & 11: Closed due to tornado damage

Hatcher Mountain Trail: Closed north of Little Bottoms

Smokemont Loop Trail: Footbridge out

Caldwell Fork Trail: Footbridges out

Note:

YOU MUST USE THE FOOD STORAGE CABLES PROVIDED AT ALL BACKCOUNTRY CAMPSITES

BACKCOUNTRY CONDITIONS ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING.

BE PREPARED FOR THE UNEXPECTED.

Updated June 26, 2012