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BMTA Headquarters



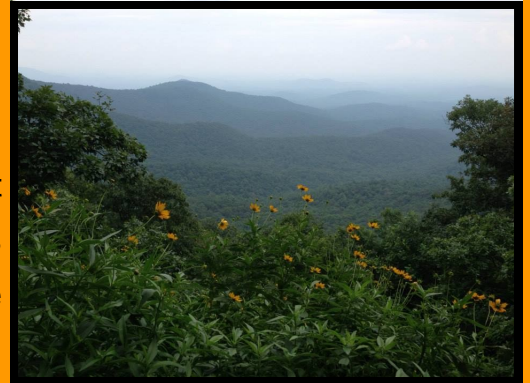
VOLUME 30, ISSUE 8

AUGUST 31, 2013

Trail Maintenance Is Its Own Reward

By David Blount

I want to take a few minutes to share with you some of the reasons why I perform trail maintenance. There is the altruistic aspect of volunteering time to ensure that trails remain available and open. A little “smugness” comes from believing the world is a better place for having left your mark on



it for the benefit of others. It is gratifying to encounter hikers in the woods who take a moment to acknowledge your work and thank you for it. I would guess that these feelings are pretty common amongst volunteers and are among the more obvious reasons to participate in this type work. While I do indulge in these feelings, what feeds my ego often does not feed my soul.

Let me speak now to what personally excites me about this whole trail business. The call of trail work is often the only excuse that breaks me out of my home and job routines and allows me a day in the woods. Once on the road and committed to the task, I never look back or wonder how else I might have spent the day. Let me point out that I have never had a bad day in the woods. If attending a group



work trip, I find myself in the company of like-minded persons who share my zeal for the woods and the trail. When I say “like-minded” I refer to the unspoken rule that we focus on what we have in common and the work at hand while letting our differences take a rest. In this setting, I always learn something I did not know about plants, animals, weather, or human nature.

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When performing section maintenance, which I usually schedule on short notice and do alone, I have lots of time to think and work through things that have been on my mind or require my attention. I can get so lost in contemplation that large portions of the work are completed on “cruise control” while my mind is freed up for other pursuits.

I find it true that in trail work, as in other areas of my life, it is often the small things that bring the greatest joy. The whole day’s work and travel can be made worthwhile by a single incident or observation. It might be a deer sighting or a grouse trying to distract me from a nearby nest. Sometimes it is a unique insect or a salamander unearthed as I clean a water diversion. The sound of a nearby owl or a hawk overhead is often the high point of the day, reminding me that I am not alone, even when working solo. One of my favorite rewards is to luck upon flame azalea in bloom in the spring time.



The mid-summer flowers in the accompanying photos were the blessing of the day on a recent late July maintenance trip on Section 1a. I challenge you to share some of what makes trail work personally rewarding for you, be it with a story, a photo, a poem, a drawing, etc. Please send your submittals to editor@bmta.org to be considered for publication in an upcoming newsletter.



Presidents Message – *Walk With Me a Moment.....*

I would like to catch you up on some of the activities of the BMTA. Things have been hopping on the Publicity front. The BMTA Display has traveled much this year including trips to Amicalola Falls State Park, the Blue Ridge Trail Town Dedication, the Blue Ridge Arts in the Park Festival, and to Western Carolina University for the ATC Biennial Conference. Articles and announcements have been published in magazines and newspapers, increasing awareness of the Association and its purpose. Fun hikes (averaging 2 per month) are introducing many people to the BMT for the first time. Negotiations are underway in Tennessee to dedicate a second Trail Town for the BMT. Stay tuned for further details and an announcement.



The Board continues to monitor and respond to Special Use Permit Scoping Notices that involve holding competitive events on the BMT. These events involve large numbers of participants on the trail for periods of 12, 24, or 36 hours. While we have not been able to prevent the use of the BMT for this type of activity, we have been effective in limiting the length of sections used and in suggesting alternative routes in some cases that still accomplish the goals of the event organizers and participants. This is a sensitive issue that will require patience and diligence as we work through the proper channels to ensure the BMT offers a quiet and primitive experience for generations to come.

A committee was appointed in early winter to consider revisions to the bylaws of the BMTA. The primary charge of the committee was to consider reducing the number of positions on the Board of Directors. The committee's recommendations have been circulated to the board and will be voted upon at the next meeting on September 7. Any proposed changes approved by the board will then be presented to the membership for review 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting on November 2. For bylaw changes to be adopted, they must be ratified by majority vote of the membership present at the Annual Meeting.

Monthly maintenance trips this year have been well attended and much good work has been accomplished. Of particular note, new techniques are being demonstrated by our USFS partners and adopted by our maintainers to deal with erosion on the trail. The goal is to create more effective water diversions that will require less maintenance. We are finding that old dogs can learn new tricks!

Several of our members have been attending planning meetings with Co-Trails, with the various FS Districts regarding their work plans and budgets for the next fiscal year, and with the National Forests of North Carolina regarding their next multi-year Forest Plan. Others have been representing the interests of the BMTA in meetings with the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition.

I have mentioned only some of the issues and activities we are engaged in this year. You can learn more by attending a work trip, a fun hike, or contacting a board member directly. In closing, let me challenge you to step up your involvement in the activities of the BMTA. I believe we have something for everyone. I'll see you on the trail!

David Blount
President, BMTA

August BMTA Fun Hike

Jacks River Trail in the Cohuttas

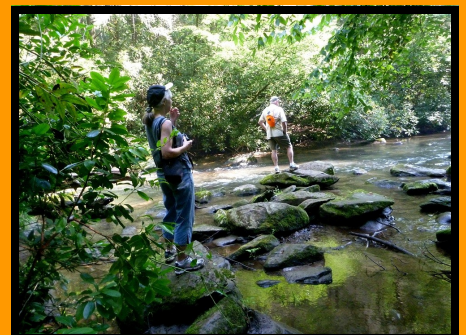
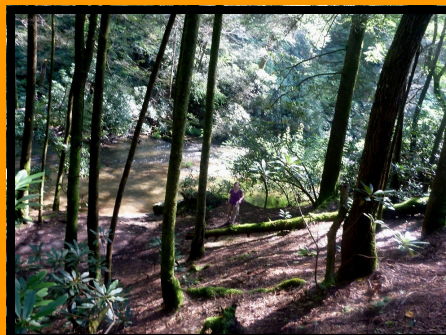
By Pam Sullivan: Hike Leader

Finally, some amazing weather made for an amazing hiking day! A group of eleven hit the Jacks River Trail for a true wilderness experience. The parking lot for the trail head was filled with buses, vans and numerous cars and we thought, "Uh, oh". Obviously the occupants headed somewhere else because we never saw anyone other than ourselves on the first sunny weekend I can remember this summer.



Orange chanterelle mushrooms dotted the landscape along with arrowheads, rattlesnake plantain and dog hobble in this wet woodlands paradise. The Jacks River was full as expected so we sat on logs and enjoyed our lunch to the music of fast-moving water in a forest filled with hemlocks and rhododendron.

After the hike, we stopped at Mercier's Apple Orchard for apple pie, ice cream and peaches. Oh, and some hard apple cider. It was truly a perfect summer outing!



Watson Gap to Dyer Gap Hike ... August 11

By Darcy Douglas: Hike Leader

We were so lucky to have great weather for this hike from Watson Gap to Dyer Gap and back. We were slightly sprinkled on once, heard some thunder, but the rain began in earnest only as we drove away. The flowers were beautiful and identified (thanks, Nancy), stories about the BMT were told, pictures were taken (thanks, Walt), the graveling of the muddiest horse paths were noted



(thanks, someone), and the sun dappling through the trees nearly the whole hike was gorgeous! It was lovely to walk near the river even with the muddy trail (from horses). It appears horses have stayed off the unauthorized portion of BMT from South Fork Trail to Dyer Gap (yea!), and while there was some horse damage and other signs on the also unauthorized portion from Watson Gap to the South Fork Trail, the abuse was less than in times past. The trail was in great shape, with a few well-placed trees across the trail to deter inappropriate trail use. We did meet three trail observers (George, Mark, and Ralph) on our way out, but otherwise had the trail to ourselves which was so pleasant! We especially welcomed first time group hiker Jerry, GATC member Curt invited by Darcy after a GATC hike, and Hank's friend Sharon, new to the BMT. Thank you to Claire for a job very well done as sweep – I so appreciate your faithfulness!



Participants in alphabetical order: Hank Baudet (m), Sharon Brewer (g), Claire Broadwell (m), Jerry Cooper (m), Darcy Douglas (m-leader), Walter Polk (m), Nancy Shofner (m), Curt Whitman (g), Doug Yarns (m), Evelin Yarns (m)

Upcoming Hikes...Ralph Heller: Hiking Director

By Ralph Heller

Saturday, September 28 Hike & Help the Hemlocks

There is one hike planned for **September**. This hike will take place on **Sept 28** and will be part of the National Public Lands Day celebration sponsored jointly by the Benton MacKaye Trail Association and Save Georgia's Hemlocks. This easy to moderate hike will take place at the Cooper Creek Scenic Area, which has many old growth trees. After the hike we will meet up with the Save Georgia's Hemlocks folks at nearby Sea Creek Falls for interesting lunch-and-learn presentations on hemlock preservation. In lieu of the hike there is the option of helping to treat hemlock trees. See article in this newsletter for full description of all activities.

To register for the hike and for meeting location and time, email Hike Leader Ralph Heller at rshbmta@gmail.com or phone at 770-235-9760.



GA Worktrip ... September 14 - Section 7c

Friends,

Fall isn't far away. It may be the best time of year to spend a day in the woods.

Join us for the [September 14](#) GA worktrip. Minimal driving on this one; we are working near Cherrylog, just a couple miles off Hwy. 515/76.

First-timers warmly welcome.

Details below, and posted on the [BMTA Activity Page](#)

Hope to see you then!

Sept. 14 - Georgia Work Trip – We will work on Section 7c on the Sisson property, mostly from Patterson Ridge down to Boardtown Road, installing water diversions and cutting back brush. We meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00AM. The “trailhead” meeting time/place is 8:45 in the lower Sisson Company parking lot by the BMTA World Headquarters off Hwy. 515/76. Trip leader is Tom Keene, 770-548-4935.

Check here for what to expect, etc.:

<http://www.bmta.org/pdfs/WorktripsWhatToExpect-revSep2011.pdf>

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Tom Keene

Georgia Maintenance Director

Benton MacKaye Trail



You Can't Beat Mother Nature < But You Can Divert Her >

By Tom Keene

The August trip was fourth in a row Georgia outing focused on improving existing water control features. The record-setting rain this summer has shown the water diversions on a number of sections in Georgia were not up to snuff. We mostly do lighter work in the summer, but this year the need has been pressing.

The beautiful Falls Branch (Section 6b) was the scene of our latest efforts at hydrology. Despite the prospect of a hot sweaty day, fifteen worthies appeared at the trailhead at 9:00AM. The entire party can be seen in the accompanying group shot. Of special note were no less than four first-timers: Joy and Frank Forehand, Jack Kennedy and Art Meyer. A tip of the hat also to Phil Guhl, who, on only his second trip, had the misfortune of stirring up a nest of yellow jackets. Despite six to eight stings Phil worked on!

Altogether it was a wonderfully productive day, despite the heat and humidity. We registered over eighty hours of work, and completed just short of thirty water diversions, as well as removing a couple of blow-downs.

Thanks to all who made it happen. Particular thanks also to George Owen and Ralph Heller who helped flag the work Friday afternoon, as well as to Barry Allen who handled the safety talk. Well done all!



Left to right: Phil Guhl, Doug Kleiber, Ralph Heller, Joy Forehand, Tom Keene, Frank Forehand, David Blount, Larry Dumas, Art Meyer, Claire Broadwell, Jack Kennedy, George Owen, Barry Allen, Walt Cook.

Picture by: Darcy Douglas



To WAG...or Not to Wag That is the Question...



By Laura Nix

My husband and I had the privilege of traveling to Mount Whitney in Lone Pine, California for a rigorous hike to the highest peak in the continental United States. Mount Whitney, part of the Sierra mountain system, boasts an impressive height of **14,505** feet at its summit. The trip from the portal (trail head) to the peak is around 13 miles and has the climber gaining over 6,000 feet in altitude.



Needless to say, much is written on the need to properly prepare for and avoid altitude sickness. Properly acclimating and even taking medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen and even prescription diamox helps the hiker avoid the dreaded altitude sickness; nausea, headaches, fatigue to name a few.

What might surprise the ambitious Mt. Whitney hiker, however, is the lack of tree cover available when nature calls. Of course, tree line ends in the Sierras well before you summit leaving the hiker/camper with only large boulders and strategic scouting affording you any privacy. You get used to this after a day or two, but that leads into the next issue; no dirt to dig in.

Most 'relief' efforts don't require digging a trench, but when one does need to bury something, the gravelly terrain and unmovable rocks do pose a dilemma. Thankfully, the forest service department does have an answer and it is free; the WAG bag.

WAG stands for 'Waste Alleviation and Gelling.' They're provided to the hiker for free when you pick up your permit. It is supposed to be the answer for discreet and sanitary 'packing out' of solid waste on a trail that does not allow for any burial and provides no privies <http://www.cleanwaste.com/wag-bag>. The hiker takes care of things and then seals the container bag for disposal at the trail head so that the trail itself does not become cluttered or tainted. This is a critical component of keeping the rocky and somewhat barren trail clean and inviting. Of course, there were times when WAG bags were sited under rocks, but for the most part hikers seemed compliant.



I can't say I had the opportunity to test this NASA-inspired invention of personal convenience, but I do have them in the car just in case....

New Hard Hats Report For Duty . . .

By Marge Heller

Tom Keene, BMTA's Georgia Maintenance Director was pleased to see the recent delivery of new protective gear. "A few months ago we ran out of hard hats on a work-trip. These new hats should take care of that problem."



A raffle for various gift certificates, donated by generous Blue Ridge, GA merchants, was held at our booth during the [April 13th](#) Trail Town event. Enough raffle money was raised to purchase a total of **20**

hard hats! Ten were allocated to Georgia and ten were given to TN/NC Maintenance Director, Ernie Engman.

<<< Save This Date >>>

Save This Date...

BMTA Annual Conference

BMTA Annual Conference



November 2013						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Mark Your Calendar



Mark Your Calendar



Hike & Help the Hemlocks Saturday, September 28, 2013

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Clements Branch Hemlock Conservation Area
Off Highway 60 near Cooper Creek Store



Save Georgia's Hemlocks and the Benton MacKaye Trail Association are teaming up again to **Hike and Help the Hemlocks** in the Clements Branch area on the Union / Fannin County border. Through a special agreement with the U. S. Forest Service, participants will be able to treat (or retreat) pre-tagged trees in designated hemlock conservation sites in the Chattahoochee National Forest.

Come join us for a family-friendly hike through some wonderful woods, a picnic at beautiful Sea Creek Falls, some interesting lunch-and-learn presentations, plenty of time to get to know other good folks who care, and a chance to help some hemlocks along the way. Participants must register in advance and let us know if you want to hike *and* treat trees or just have a nice hike — either way it'll be great fun!

So dust off your hiking shoes, pack a sack lunch, and invite a friend to come along. We'll provide drinks and dessert. There's no cost, and driving directions are posted on the SGH web site.

Space is limited, so please register early. For more information or registration:

- Hiking & treating trees — call 706-429-8010 or e-mail donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org.
- Hiking only — call 706-636-3499 or e-mail rshbmta@gmail.com.



Leaving a Footpath For Generations To Follow



By Gene Nix

A few weeks ago, James, John, and I spent the day brushing out Section 5b of the Benton MacKaye Trail. We left out early in the morning and were planning to work from Ledford Gap to the top of Brawley Mountain Fire Tower. I was going to sling-blade and the boys were going to spend their time lopping. We took our bikes so we could ride down the mountain after we had reached the top of Brawley.....so we drove to the top of the mountain,



dropped the bikes off, and drove back down to Ledford. It took us three hours to clean and brush-out one mile of trail, which is straight up, but we had so much fun. As we reached the top, we climbed on our bikes and started back down toward the truck. John was leading, then James, and then me. About half way down the mountain I saw John lay his bike down and jump up and scream, STOP..... rattlesnake. We came to a stop and John was jumping up and down screaming don't come down here. John had just ran over a 5 foot

rattlesnake. It was in the middle of the road and it was between John and us. You could hear it rattling. As I came close to throw rocks at it, trying to get it to move off the road, it struck at me. We finally got it to leave the road so James and I could pass.....Wow, nice little adventure on the BMT.

