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BMTA Officers 2014-2015

President:	Bob Ruby
Vice President:	Tom Keene
Secretary:	Joy Forehand
Treasurer:	Margaret Evans
GA M/C:	Barry Allen
TN/NC M/C:	Rick Harris
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Ralph Heller
Membership/Store:	Ken Cissna
Publicity:	Marcia Lehman
Conservation:	Steve Bayliss
Past President:	David Blount
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
State Rep GA:	Mark Yost
State Rep TN/NC:	Rick Harris



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AUGUST 2015

BMTA President's Column August 2015

BMTA Sponsored VIF Agreement

In last month's column I mentioned that BMTA and the Forest Service have been working on a Sponsored Volunteer in the Forests Agreement (VIF) which will extend across all three of the National Forests that the BMT crosses. It will provide more consistent trailwork planning and procedures, as well as Workers Comp and Tort protections for our volunteers when working on FS lands. As of now, I have signed on behalf of BMTA and the Agreement is out for signature by our five District Rangers. I hope it will be in effect before our first scheduled workday of September.

Included as attachments and supplements to the Agreement are:

- **Job Hazard Analyses (JHAs)** for General Field Work, Trailwork, Chainsaw and Crosscut Saw Operations. These standard Forest Service provided JHAs provide extensive lists of hazards along with recommended avoidance/abatement actions.
- A BMTA documented **Emergency Action Plan (EAP)** to be reviewed and followed when working on the BMT (either on BMTA-organized workdays or for individual or small group section maintenance activities). We have documented Emergency contacts for trailworkers and for hikers from Springer Mountain through the Smokies.
- This will be supplemented with a **BMTA Emergency Communications Plan** which provides cellphone, ham radio and satellite SPOT/SEND procedures. Most of us have cell phones, but cell coverage is not available at many remote locations on the BMT. From a suggestion by Rick Harris, we have learned that new Baofeng UV-82 ham radio transceivers cost only about \$33, plus \$15 for a ham license, with no additional monthly or annual fees! BMTA is suggesting that many trailworkers and hikers will want to avail themselves of this affordable communication device to EMS, Forest Service offices and ham relay stations. More on this will be documented and distributed shortly.

We have updated our **Tailgate Safety Briefing** documents to include the above changes.

There is a lot of new information to improve your safety. We are planning a training session for volunteers on topics related to the VIF Agreement during January. We'll announce the date as soon as it is scheduled. While the VIF Agreement stimulated this analysis and documentation, I think you will find that these are common sense enhancements that should be implemented anyway. In addition to the class, all these documents will be posted online at www.bmta.org.

Annual Meeting

I hope to see you all at the **BMTA Annual Meeting weekend on November 6-8** where we will elect the BMTA Board for 2016, review the state of the BMT and plans for next year, and celebrate the 35th Anniversary of BMTA. Surrounding the business meeting and meals we will have a selection of hikes which you can read about elsewhere in this and the next issue of the newsletter.

Bob



BMTA Headquarters

Save the Date November 6-8

BIG BMTA 35TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND

By Marcia Lehman and George Owen

Hikes - Food - Celebratory Banquet on Saturday Evening with Program are all part of the big 35th Anniversary Weekend on November 6-8. The banquet will be held Saturday, Nov. 7, in the Community Room of the Community and Southern Bank, located in Blue Ridge, GA at 150 Orvin Lance Dr. near the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce building (exact time to be announced).

Special hikes are being planned for the weekend, all on the Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia except for one above the Ocoee River in nearby southeast Tennessee. Two hikes, a longer and shorter one, will be available Saturday. An evening dinner after the Friday hike is also being planned for those wishing to eat together following the hike that day. Details on the hikes will appear on the BMTA website in mid-September and in the next newsletter.

The banquet Saturday evening will feature a meal (price soon to be announced) as well as a program on **"35Years of Benton MacKaye Trail Builders"** which will focus on some of our earliest activities and notable more recent achievements. **"Maintainer of the Year" and other awards will be announced. Our BMTA volunteers will be recognized.** Another highlight of the Saturday evening program will be the **election of our officers and board** to lead us in 2016 by you, the member attendees.

Also we have just initiated planning for a day-long **outdoor orienteering training session** for those desiring such on Saturday instead of a regular hike that day - details TBA.

SPECIAL REQUEST: Anyone with old photos or even slides of BMTA events and people - especially those with humorous content - are invited to please share these for our Saturday night program. You may submit these to the Annual Meeting Committee made up of Tom Keene, Darcy Douglas, and George Owen.

So please do it now. Mark your calendars for a fun and exciting weekend on November 6-8, and if you can't come for it all, come for any part, especially the Saturday evening banquet!



Report of the BMTA Nominations Committee for 2016 Officers

By Tom Keene

Position	2015 Holder	Yrs. In Serv.	2016 Nominee
President	Bob Ruby	1	Bob Ruby
Vice President	Tom Keene	1	Tom Keene
Secretary	Joy Forehand	2	Joy Forehand
Treasurer	Margaret Evans	3	Margaret Evans
GA Maintenance	Barry Allen	1	Barry Allen
TN/NC Maintenance	Rick Harris (acting)	0	Ken Jones
Smokies Coordinator	Dick Evans	1	Dick Evans
Membership	Ken Cissna	1	Ken Cissna
Publicity	Marcia Lehman	1	FTF*
Conservation	Stephen Bayliss	2	FTF*
Hiking	Ralph Heller	3	Mike Pilvinsky
State Rep: GA	Mark Yost	1	President's Choice
State Rep: TN/NC	Rick Harris	3	President's Choice

*FTF- From the Floor: The Nomination Committee is currently seeking interested and qualified members for these positions. We anticipate that nominations will be made from the floor at the annual meeting.

September 26 CoTrails General Meeting

Please join us Saturday, September 26 for a general meeting of our Georgia CoTrails Community, a make-up event for our June weather postponement. We are hosting this event at the Jake and Bull Mountain Trail Complex -- one of the first areas assessed as part of the early mission of CoTrails. Barry Allen is the BMTA CoTrail's representative.

Bring your bike, your horse or your walking shoes and enjoy the trails!! People are encouraged to arrive by 10:00 on Saturday morning. After a brief introduction, we plan on a walking/riding review of the some of the work done at Jake and Bull, and perhaps, some of the work that still needs to be done. Lunch will be served following our morning walk thru -- hot dogs and burgers provided by CoTrails.(\$5.00 donations will be welcome). After lunch, a representative from the Forest Service will review recent legislation affecting the trail community. We will have a short review of trail projects currently underway in the CONF.

BMTA Conservation Director, 2016 Notice of Position Opening

Would you be interested in serving on the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) Board of Directors and in learning about and playing a significant role in relations between the BMTA and the U.S. Forest Service? If so, read on.

The BMTA Nominations Committee for 2016 is looking for BMTA members who might be interested serving in the position of Conservation Director on the Board. That position is mostly about monitoring Forest Service proposals/actions that relate to the trail, and assisting the association president and other officers in responding to such proposal/actions. Here is description of the Conservation position as it appears in the Association bylaws: *The Conservation Director shall monitor conservation issues, including, but not limited to Forest Service and National Park Service special use permits, scoping notices and similar publications that have bearing on the Benton MacKaye Trail, shall report such issues to the Board, shall inform the membership of such issues, and shall assist the Board in forming policy responses to these issues.*

If you think this position might fit your talents and interests and would like additional information please contact Tom Keene, Chair, 2016 BMTA Nominations Committee by email at [tkbmta AT gmail DOT com](mailto:tkbmta@gmail.com).

Leave No Trace Video Series

Leave No Trace (LNT) has long been one of the guiding principles of BMTA. We want to protect the unspoiled natural beauty of our trail.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy shares this ethic and is facing the challenge of a surge of hikers resulting from the popular hiking movies. In order to encourage A.T. hikers to use LNT principles, ATC has produced an excellent series of entertaining and informative videos that are intended to teach visitors how to reduce their imprint on the A.T. The videos are titled **Don't Be That Guy – Appalachian Trail - Leave No Trace**.

Designed to appeal to a youthful demographic, the large menu of 17 videos gives a choice of emphasizing the "short and funny" videos lasting about 1 minute each, or a comprehensive approach (including a second video for each **Leave No Trace** principle, and an 8 minute "Conversation with Experienced Hikers"). A poignant introductory film (the "Story Behind the Videos") and a blooper reel are thrown in for good measure. They can be seen on YouTube at these links:

Short series (7 videos, 7 minutes) showing only part 1 of each principle: <https://goo.gl/bTYMAu>

Full series (all 17 videos, 34 minutes) starting with "The Story Behind the Videos": <https://goo.gl/wzFLsC>

Full series (all 17 videos, 34 minutes) starting with "Plan Ahead and Prepare": <https://goo.gl/yJEffC>

Take a look, and share them with your hiking friends, especially the young ones!

FAMILY THRU-HIKES BMT

by Josh, Elizabeth, Noah, Chloe, Laurel & Samuel Granderson



Josh and Elizabeth Granderson and their four children of Siloam Springs, Ark., completed a 305.7-mile thru-hike of the Benton Mackaye Trail from June 14-July 23, 2015. Josh Granderson teaches ninth-grade physical science and pre-AP biology at Southwest Junior High School in Springdale, Ark. Elizabeth Granderson is a homemaker and a visually impaired hiker. **Day 1 the family begins their journey at Amicalola Falls State Park** using the 8.7 mile AT approach trail leading to the BMT.

Laurel Granderson, age 11

“This summer I did what most kids and grownups haven't ever done. This adventure was packed full of blue mushrooms, river fordings, flowers, creeks, and occasional people. Every day was the same routine: eat, walk, and sleep. But everything had new things, or old things, but a different color or texture, etc. But escaping civilization makes you think and wish for all the things at home that you took for granted. For example, shelter, a/c, showers, beds, endless food, cars, music, tap water, and flushing toilets. But the good thing about this was, when I got home, I became way more thankful for them! --Llama”



Laurel eating a sandwich at Towhee Creek



Noah at Sycamore Creek

Samuel Granderson, age 14

“My trail name is 'Tree Rat' and I successfully thru-hiked the Benton Mackaye Trail. We started June 14 and finished July 23. We saw a variety of animals that included: bears, deer, bats, frogs, toads, birds, salamanders, snails, slugs, lizards, snakes, mice, turtles, hogs, turkeys, quail, skinks, chipmunks, squirrels, fish, and red efts. We slept in tents and sleeping bags and cooked with two small stoves. Every 7 or so days, we would get out and have a hotel and resupply.

We hiked between 0 and 13.2 miles each day. We spent evenings playing cards, listening to our Ipods, and swimming in the nearby streams. The trail was overgrown in some places, but most of the time it was clear. Our favorite dinners were Macaroni and cheese with bacon bits mixed in, noodle sides with Pringles, and ramen with Pringles.

The hike was fun, but it made us appreciate the things we take for granted like hot showers, clean clothes, warm beds, and dry shelter without the thought of a leak. I look forward to hiking again and want to thank all the people who made it possible. Thank You!”

Noah Granderson, age 9,

“I, Noah Granderson, hiked the Benton MacKaye Trail, and I'm so glad. My family made it the whole way without any problems. The BMT is a fun trail to see—the views, and animals. In Georgia it was really hot, but once you would start to go North, it would get cooler. So now we saw snails, salamanders, frogs, three bears, ten snakes, three mice and lots of toads. I can't count them all, because we saw too many. I lost count. We only saw two groups of hikers and lots of tourists. My family slept in sleeping bags and inside of tents. We touched the Appalachian trail about 3 or 4 times. The BMT starts at Springer mountain as you know and we did the Appalachian Approach trail, and ends down off Mt. Sterling to Big Creek at the bridge. It is 287 miles, but we hiked 305.7 miles. After I was done, I felt like a car, because I hiked all those miles, and then I saw our car.”



Samuel at Hangover in the Koyce Kilmer Wilderness

Shared the trail with a timber rattler!!!



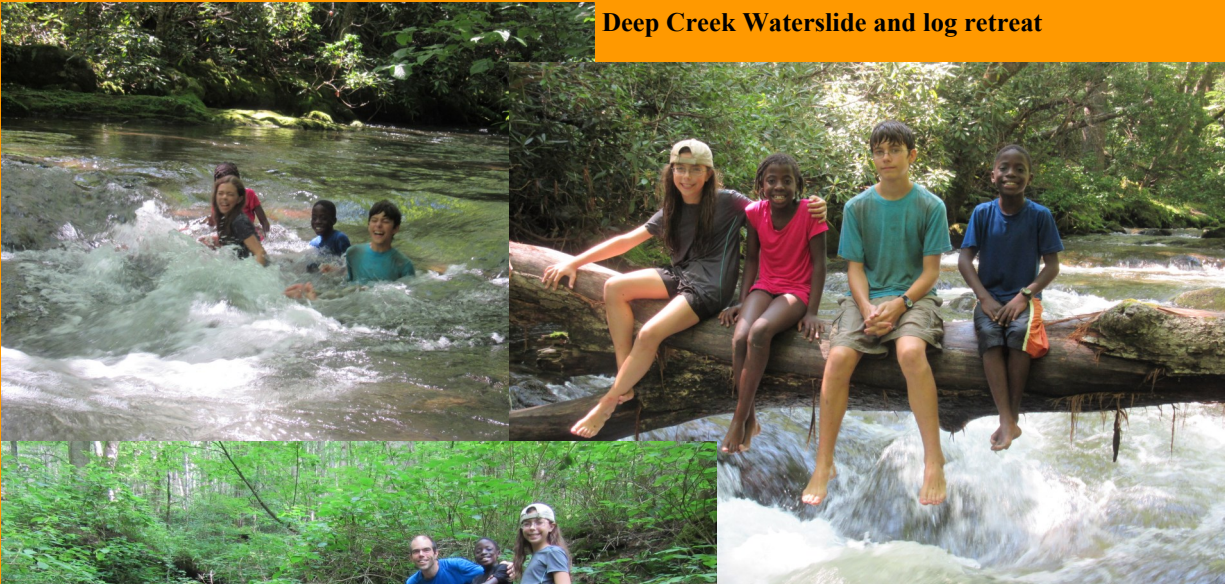


Chloe Granderson, age 9

“This summer I hiked the Whole BMT! It was awesome! We saw 3 bears, lots of salamanders, and snails—it was great! I loved all the views, especially the sunset at Newton Bald! I liked all the flowers! There were lots of big trees! We stayed in cabins or hotels once a week. My favorite meals were: 1- ramen noodles and chicken, 2-macaroni and cheese with bacon. I really liked all the sunsets. I HAD A BLAST! Chloe!”

Chloe with a skipper on her shoulder

Deep Creek Waterslide and log retreat



Laurel Gap Shelter the morning of the final day!!!!



Family at headwaters of Chasteen Creek

First Aid II

by Dick Hurd, MD

(Doctor Hurd is a Silver Service Award (25+ years) recipient from ATC and has hiked the Appalachian Trail. He wrote a series of articles on backcountry first aid for the GATC Mountaineer and has graciously given us permission to reprint it for BMTA. Look for installments in future newsletters. He reminds us that he has compiled information from a variety of public sources, seasoned with common sense from his years and miles of backpacking. He is not giving medical advice, and this guidance does not create a doctor/patient relationship.)

I will now discuss specific use of items in the first aid kit, plus ideas for improvisation using available materials, and then move on to specific treatment of common conditions.

Antibiotic (AB) ointment is for small cuts, scratches, abrasions that are not bleeding, and may not need a dressing.

Betadine is for cleansing and dressing larger and/or bleeding injuries.

Steroid cream is for itching bites, stings, and poison ivy.

Band-aids may be used as is to dress small wounds, or cut in strips to pull edges of a gaping wound together.

Safety pins can be used to make an arm sling: with the forearm across the chest or abdomen, Napoleon style, pin the sleeve of a long sleeve shirt to the shirt, or fold the bottom of a T-shirt up and over the forearm, and pin the shirt to itself. The tip of the pin can be used to dig out splinters.

Dressing sponges cover a wound, and have two purposes: to keep the outside environment away from the wound, and to wick blood and serum away from the wound. When a sponge becomes saturated, it should be changed.

Aspirin/Tylenol/Aleve/Advil: you can use these as you would at home, but in first aid it is for pain relief. My preference would be 1 Tylenol plus 2 Aleve (Naproxen). You should know in advance how you are going to use every item in your first aid kit.

Because you can't cover all possibilities, **improvisation** is an essential supplement to your first aid kit. A bandanna, T-shirt, or other clothing can be used as is for a dressing, or cut into strips for a bandage. When tying a bandage, use a bow, so it can be loosened and retied as needed. Several wraps of duct tape around a water bottle will provide material for many uses, including first aid. The rope/cord you carry for clothesline/bearline can be used circumferentially at several points to make a leg splint. The basic splint can be made from a piece of Ridgerest mattress, supplemented with a few small finger sized flexible tree branches for stability. Be prepared to cut up a Ridgerest to make a cervical collar, arm, elbow, hand/wrist, forearm, foot/ankle, knee, or full leg splint. Water is handy for cooling burned skin and washing out dirty wounds: use a stream if convenient, or canteens, and pour it on. If water is scarce, pour some in a ZipLoc bag, poke a hole in it, and squeeze, and you have a pressure jet! Soap is helpful for cleansing a dirty abrasion or cut; the sooner you get the dirt out, along with copious irrigation, the better the chance of avoiding infection. I mentioned honey as an antibiotic ointment substitute.

For more info, I suggest you Google "wilderness medicine improvisation", and in fact for any first aid topic for more in depth info, Google "wilderness medicine X" with X with X being what you are interested in.

Moving on to treatment, I will start with common, and usually minor, problems, and in the woods, that usually means **skin**. Burns, abrasions, cuts, blisters, chafing, poison ivy, stings, bites (mosquito, gnat, black fly), hematoma of the toe nail/finger nail, paronychia (edge of the finger nail) infection, and ingrown toe nail. Your skin is your protection from the external environment, so treat it respectfully! It does a pretty good job at keeping the outside at bay, but it is not bullet proof!

Burns: cool the skin with water up to 60 seconds, then dress if blistered, leave open otherwise. Elevate; no ointments or antiseptics!

Abrasion: think coarse sandpaper on your skin. Cleanse, then dress. AB ointment or Betadine.

Cuts: cleanse; apply pressure til bleeding stops. Bring edges close with steristrips, AB ointment or Betadine, dress, use pressure bandage if still bleeding, elevate above heart level.

Blisters: A bad blister on the foot can doom your hike. Prevent with Moleskin at the first sign of a "hot spot". If blister forms, it can resorb the fluid with time and protection. If you choose to pop the blister, do so at the margin with the tip of heat sterilized safety pin, express the serum, and leave the skin intact. If already popped open, cleanse, apply Betadine and dress.

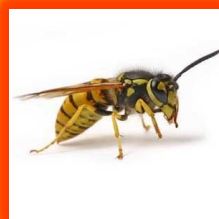
Chafing: Again, prevention is best. I routinely use Monistat "Chafing Relief Powder - Gel", available without prescription. If you chafe anyway, clean w/ soap & water, and apply body powder such as Ammens, to dry it out, keep it dry, and avoid further friction.

Poison ivy, stings, bites: the problem here is itching; use steroid cream. If you scratch, they may become infected. I have seen a case of Staph septicemia from mosquito bites infected this way.

Nail hematoma: usually from a toe jamming in the boot (?wrong fit) or hitting a finger with a rock. You may lose the nail, but mainly this is just uncomfortable. If you heat the point of a safety pin to red hot, it will then melt right through the nail and release the pressure! I would not try this unless hiking was impossible.

Paronychia or ingrown nail infection: these are painful but the infection tends to remain localized. Heat water as warm as you can stand, soak for 5 minutes 3x/day, use Betadine after each soak.

Beware of the Yellow Jackets!!!





2015 Cleanup



**9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
September 26, 2015
At Tammen Park, Blue Ridge, GA**

**Join us for a morning out collecting litter from our
rivers, streams and lake!**

Gloves and garbage bags will be provided.



Participants will receive lunch & t-shirts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

reich.peggy AT yahoo.com or 404-219-3876

riversalive.org



Blue Ridge GA



Blue Ridge GA



Blue Ridge GA



WHAT IN THE BLAZES?

By Dick Evans

When dinosaurs ruled the world, and George Owen was a strapping young man, there was little need for trail signs. Ancient Man only entered the woods in an effort to find food, and keep from being food, so distances were short and easily remembered. However, as Ancient Man ventured further, he would occasionally become lost. (Caused, according to Ancient Woman, by not stopping to ask for directions.) This presented some problems, and when stone axes were developed, the idea of making a chop mark on a tree seemed to cure this confusion. There were lots of trees and a bit of sap was no big deal. (Of course, this was before the Forest Service was created-probably a good thing, or else we would still be waiting for the Environmental Impact Statement so that Eve could eat the first apple, but I digress.) By following a series of these chops, or "Blazes", you could find your way thru the dense woods to other locations. This was very beneficial in an era when "Ugh, arg, mmnth." meant "Drop by about 6 for drinks and supper. We are the third cave on the left after the waterfall." Made things simple. Early native Americans tended to follow easily followed geographic features, like rivers. (You aviators know that "IFR" {Instrument Flight Rules} for navigation originally meant "I Follow River.") When western Europeans came to exploit the resources, they started creating foot and horse paths to find their way around, and a little axe work on a few trees might mean the difference between finding another village and wandering for long periods of confusion. This situation really existed until the late 1900's, and some old trees can still be noted with axe chops on their sides. During the early 1920's, when MacKaye's Appalachian Trail proposal increased public awareness, efforts were made to stop the chopping, and start using paint on the trees to make a more environmentally friendly method of noting the trail locations. Typically, if the footpath was clearly visible, blazes were not needed, and very little time was spent on tread ways. As more paths were developed, blazes of different size, shape and color were used to differentiate paths. Early on, the Appalachian Trail choose a 2" x 6" White Mark as the official marker of the path of the trail, with a double blaze indicating sharp changes in direction, and blue blazes indicating side trails to various sites. Seemed pretty simple, and left lots of opportunity for other trails to choose other colors or shapes to eliminate confusion by those hiking. Some of those choices left something to be desired. Indeed, the blaze of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail in North Carolina is a white circle, certainly an obvious choice when sitting at a desk. However, in the woods, where white fungal growth is common, deciding if you are looking at a blaze or merely a round growth can present some uncertainty. Undeterred, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association choose a white diamond, vertically elongated, as our blaze.

Enter our friends from the Forest Service, who have never been known for keeping things simple. In their sign guidelines, they made a number of changes to the commonly used methods of trail marking in an effort to make thing clearer to the recreating public. In their vision, the tread way of the trail was easily discernible, so blazes are rarely, if ever, needed. Only trail signs at junctions would be needed to get folks on the proper path. When the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964, it was decided that one of the "recreational opportunities" offered in wilderness was that of route-finding. Wanderers could no longer necessarily count on a visible path, but instead had to rely on map and compass, plus "experience" in following a route. Blazes were deemed to be an affront to those in wilderness areas, and basically outlawed in favor of trail signs at trail junctions. Limited provisions were made to allow for some "reassurance" markings to allow hikers to be sure they were on the path, but these were (and are) very

limited in practice. The "on-the-ground" reality was a bit different. Many of the designated wildernesses had in fact been logged, leaving old logging paths, railroad roadbeds, etc., throughout the area. Additional "social" trails by local folks fishing, hunting, etc., further muddied the ground, resulting in often confusing paths crossing and creating navigational problems by those not familiar with the area. In particular, the Cohutta and Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wildernesses can be confusing, even to those comfortable with the area. The Rich Mountain Wilderness has no designated trails, so that presents further "opportunities" for folks. When I hiked the BMT a few years ago, I was stunned by the almost total lack of any trail markings and signs, culminating in one 27 mile section which had only one marker in the whole length. Signs that should have been present were missing, or unreadable. Although I had no navigational issues, many folks do, and Sgt. Rock in his Thru Hikers Guide says that even a Trail God like himself can get confused and head in the wrong direction if not careful.

In discussing this with our Forest Service Partners, we found that they were very aware of the situation, but due to budget cuts, they simply did not have the funds to do any meaningful replacement of these signs on any reasonable time frame. After discussions with BMTA Board Members, threats of physical violence and other methods were employed to convince the Board at the time to authorize replacement of the signs along the Trail. This would give a consistent appearance and consistent standards as to the information contained on the signs. After news of this decision became public, many persons choose to make donations to the BMTA to help offset the anticipated \$10,000 cost for all these new signs, with one extremely anonymous Donor gifting half that amount to benefit hikers. Anyone who would like to help underwrite this expense can just send a check to the Cherrylog address as a Tax-Deductible Donation, or use the Web Site to do the same. It would be greatly appreciated!

In working with the Forest Service, a number of parameters for the signs emerged, and I thought that a listing of some of those with some explanation might be of interest to the Members. There may be some exceptions to these items, but in general:

1. Trail Junction signs outside of Wilderness Areas:

- Should be rectangular.
- Usually made of High Density Polyethylene (HDPE).
- Show the Trail Name and Trail Number.
- May show distances. (Under 3 miles in 1/4 miles, over 3 miles in even miles).
- May have destinations noted.
- Should have directional arrows to indicate direction of the trail(s).



2. Trail Junction signs within Wilderness Areas:

- Should be a Five-Sided Sign (to indicate Wilderness. Don't fret, I didn't know that myself before starting this process.)
- Should be of native materials, typically Red Oak, with scorched lettering.
- Show the Trail Name and Trail Number.
- May NOT show distances.
- May NOT show destinations.
- Should have directional arrows.

At some junctions, one sign may show things adequately, but **others may require two signs at an angle** to ensure directions are clear. In the Slickrock Wilderness, we were able to use 6" cedar posts for mountings, which is in keeping with the wilderness local materials motif. Other areas may use 4x4 or 6x6 posts, stained to look less objectionable to hikers. In general, the signs and posts should fit in with the surroundings, rather than standing out at a glance.

Most of this project does not address Trailhead signage. Often, those signs require Department of Transportation or local county approvals as well as compliance with USFS Regulations. A second phase of the signage project will attempt to address those locations, but will likely take much longer to achieve. Other areas will be addressed in the future, but basically we should have all the trail junctions signed within a year or so, having started with the Tennessee sections last year (complicated, to be sure, but the reroute over Haeo, Hangover and Stratton Bald). The Yellowcreek Mountain Section, between Tapoco and Fontana, currently has temporary vinyl signs pending traffic review and possible reroutes after three years of usage. In any event, by the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of the BMTA in 2020, we should have a complete and comprehensive signage program to assist hikers on "a footpath for generations to follow."



TWO WATERFALL HIKES IN ONE

story by Mike Pilvinsky photos by Mike Pilvinsky and Kathy Williams

On August 14, eleven BMTA members and two guests left Blue Ridge, GA and headed toward Helen, GA. Traveling along the Richard B Russell Scenic Highway, they stopped to hike the Dukes Creek Falls trail, and then motored just one mile to the Raven Cliff Falls trail. Walking the first 30 minutes in a light rain, the hikers were in awe of the magnificent rushing water which seemed to suddenly appear out of the mist.

After an easy 2.5 mile trek to Dukes Creek Falls and back, they were soon on their way to the next trail head of the day. There we discovered the rain had an unexpected blessing for us. It made an August morning pleasantly cool. Along the longer trail they took plenty of time to view and photograph several unnamed waterfalls en route to the cliffs. Raven Cliff Falls is very unique in that the water actually falls thru a chimney between the massive boulders for about 40 feet but you have to do some tough climbing for the last 50 feet to see it.

We stopped at Raven Cliff Falls for lunch and then returned to the trail head for a total of 7.5 miles that day.



Intrepid hiker Bob cools off at Raven Cliff!

Georgia Work Trip Report, August 2015

By Barry Allen

The morning of Saturday, August 8, started early. It had to; we needed an early start on a hot August day to beat some of the heat AND to cover some four miles of trail in need of a cut back. We met at 7:30 AM at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge, and proceeded on to Thunder Rock Campground, about a 20 mile drive from Blue Ridge. After a brief safety speech and a word on the days' work, we headed out in a three-car shuttle for Kimsey Highway and the beginning of our work.

David Blount, Ralph Heller and Doug Kleiber were our chauffeurs for the trip; the eight mile drive up Kimsey Highway to the trailhead for Dry Pond Lead took a solid 35 minutes plus the 15 minute drive from the start of Kimsey Hwy. (For those of you who have never been on Kimsey Hwy, you need to make the drive at least once to understand the nuance of the term 'highway'.) Once at the trailhead for Dry Pond Lead, our chauffeurs drove back to Thunder Rock to work the area just north of the campground with brush cutters and loppers. The rest of our group – some nine men and women strong -- faced a half mile hike to the intersection of Dry Pond Lead and Benton MacKaye; the last 0.10 mile had to be cut through a heavy growth of weeds which had rendered Dry Pond Lead completely invisible under the well-nourished and heavily watered plant growth. When we broke through to the BMT, the work was all downhill for the rest of the day.

The work was loppers and sling blades, with a fire rake and ax or two to help with some of the young saplings. The work was primarily in the Little Frog Wilderness and Wilderness Study Area, which means no power tools. But I can tell you, we didn't need power tools -- the yellow jackets kept our motors humming on this August day. Our 'Ramblin Wreck' wasn't from Georgia Tech, but we sure engineered our way through four tough miles of trail. At the end of the day, we all felt like we were wearing track shoes: we ran to stay ahead of the jackets as all but four of our group ended up nursing the effects of these pesky yellow wasps.

Eventually we need to get back to this section with a cross-cut or two to remove a few minor blowdowns, but we accomplished our primary goal of brush removal. We had a great day, and my unbridled appreciation goes out to our crew for the day: Phil and Debra Guhl, Tom Keene, Mike Pilvinsky, Frank Forehand, Don Kenny, George Owen, and Paul Brame. These folks, along with the aforementioned 'chauffeurs' did an outstanding job. (and David, Ralph and Doug – the Forest Service has already sent us complimentary note on how good the trail looks under the power lines!) HOPE TO SEE YOU NEXT MONTH AS WE WORK WATER DIVERSIONS ON SECTIONS 3 AND 4 FROM SKEENAH GAP.

SEPTEMBER WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT – BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Please join us **Saturday, Sept 12** as we work Benton MacKaye sections 3c and 4a on our monthly work trip.

Where: Section 3c and 4a – Skeenah Gap Rd Trailhead. We will work section 3c south, from Skeenah Gap parking. We will work section 4a north, from same area.

When: **Saturday, September 12, 2015**

Meet: The Village Restaurant, Blue Ridge – 8:00 AM for breakfast or 8:30 AM for ride to Skeenah Gap Rd. As alternative, meet at 9:00 at Skeenah Gap Rd trailhead parking.

Plan for the Day: From Skeenah Gap Rd, we will split into two groups: Group One will begin work on new water diversions for section 4a. Group Two will work to clean existing diversions on 3c. We will supply fire rakes, McClouds and pulaskis for the work

What to bring: minimum 2 liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.

Contact: Barry Allen at bmtabarry ATgmail.com or 770-294-7384

TN/NC Work Trip - McFarland Road to Lost Creek Campground - August 22, 2015

By Rick Harris

Eight maintainers logged and brushed out the Benton MacKaye Trail from McFarland Road to Lost Creek Campground south of the Hiwassee River. The weather was good for the work, not too hot and humid and no rain. We all met at the Hiwassee River Launch Site at 9 AM, then carpooled to the work site. Bill Lundin (section maintainers) and Larry Van Dyke went in from the north end by Lost Creek Campground with brush cutters and the rest went in from the south end at McFarland Road. Four maintainers (Rick Harris, James Anderson, Rebecca Levings and Brendan Levings) using brush cutters cleared the first half mile near McFarland Road which was very overgrown. This entire section from McFarland Road to Lost Creek Campground was included in a controlled burn within the past year. Also the section just past the end of the gated forest service road was very overgrown where the upper story was open to sunlight due to dead pine trees. Otherwise the trail was fairly easy to brush out. Ken Jones and Brenda Harris logged out the trail from south to north, clearing about 15 trees off the corridor, some of them fairly large. We finished about 3:30 PM but by the time we retrieved the vehicles it was about 5 PM before everyone could head home. This section of the trail is now in great shape.

If you would like to help on any upcoming work trips on the BMT or in the Tellico or Hiwassee/Ocoee Ranger Districts, see the notices on the Maintenance drop down on our Cherokee Hiking Club or BMTA website or go to our Cherokee Hiking Club Facebook page or Meetup page. The work trips are also posted on the BMTA Facebook page and the Tellico Ranger District Trail Maintenance Facebook page. We also send out emails announcing the work trips. If you would like to receive these emails, contact Rick Harris at [HarrisRi AT aol.com](mailto:HarrisRi@AOL.com) to be added to the email list.

TN/NC BMTA Sept 26 Work Trip BMT Sections 16d-e - Bald River to Tellico River

by Rick Harris

Meet at the Pheasant Fields Picnic Area on Tellico River Road just upstream from Green Cove at 9 AM. We will leave some cars there and some at Campsite 11 on Bald River Road, then we will drive to the BMT crossing of Sugar Mountain. One crew will go down the north non-wilderness side to the Tellico River with chain saws and brush cutters. The other crew will go down the south side to the Bald River and Brookshire Creek in the wilderness section with crosscut and swing blades. We should finish by 4 PM. To sign up or for information, contact Rick Harris at [HarrisRi AT ol.com](mailto:HarrisRi@OL.com) or 423-253-6358 (h), 513-260-1184 (c). Drivers will need to have high clearance 4WD vehicles to negotiate Sugar Mountain Road.

This is your opportunity to see two beautiful mountain rivers and the Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area, an area we hope will soon become a 9000 acre true Wilderness. We will be driving by Bald River Falls and Baby Falls and will be walking past the Upper Bald River Falls. You Georgia folks should come up to Tennessee for this one. Well worth the trip!

Mark Your Calendar !!!!! Hike & Help the Hemlocks Saturday, September 26

9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Lake Winfield Scott Campground
Off Highway 180 near Suches

Save Georgia's Hemlocks and the Benton MacKaye Trail Association are teaming up again for our annual **Hike and Help the Hemlocks** event at Lake Winfield Scott Campground. It is accessed from Highway 180 / Wolf Pen Gap Rd., which runs off Highway 60 near Suches.

The morning will offer a choice of two activities. You can take an educational family-friendly hike led by BMTA members through some wonderful woods where you'll enjoy beautiful scenery and learn a bit about the efforts being made to save the hemlocks in the Chattahoochee National Forest.

Or you can participate in a service project with SGH and the U. S. Forest Service to treat (or retreat) pre-tagged hemlocks in designated conservation sites within the campground.

Then we'll all come together for a picnic beside the lake, some interesting lunch-and-learn presentations, and plenty of time to get to know other good folks who love the outdoors. Participants must register in advance and let us know whether you want to hike or treat trees — either way it'll be great fun!

So dust off your boots, pack a sack lunch, and invite a friend to come along. We'll provide drinks and dessert. Driving directions and other details are posted on the SGH and BMTA web sites.

Space may be limited, so please register early. For registration and details, contact:

Treating trees — call 706-429-8010 or e-mail donna AT savegeorgiashemlocks.org.

Hiking — call 706-636-3499 or e-mail rshbmta AT gmail.com.

www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org



www.bmta.org



UPCOMING HIKES

by Ralph Heller – Hiking Director

Friday, September 18 – Emery Creek Falls - In and out 5.4 miles

Hike Description: Moderate. Very scenic hike to stay cool in summer along Emery Creek deep in the Cohuttas. Involves about 12 stream crossings and ends at a pair of waterfalls, the first 40-50 ft. high and the second about 25 ft. high. Expect to get wet, as at least one crossing is knee deep. Water shoes are recommended. There is not much elevation gain, but the footing is rough, and the trail climbs over some large boulders at the confluence of Holly Creek. For those who would like to take a cool dip, there are some swimming holes along Holly Creek. Bring lunch and at least 2 liters of water due to summer heat.

For information on this hike and to register for meeting time and location, contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky (mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com) or call 706-889-5254

Saturday, September 26 - National Public Lands Day – Yearly Hike & Help the Hemlocks Event at Lake Winfield Scott. In and out 3 miles on Jarrard Gap Trail.

Hike Description: Easy, moderate. Hike leader is George Owen, one of the founding members of the BMTA and also a member of the AT and Mountain High Hikers. George has a wealth of knowledge about trails in Georgia and many other locations including Switzerland. Trail goes from Lake Winfield Scott up to the Appalachian Trail at Slaughter Gap. On the return trip, the hike will also take the trail which circles Lake Winfield Scott. After the hike, there will be a picnic with some interesting lunch-and-learn presentations. Bring a sack lunch and water. For more information on this event, see the article on Public Lands Day in this newsletter.

For meeting time and location contact Ralph Heller (rshbmta AT gmail.com or call 770-235-9760).

Saturday & Sunday, September 26-27 Yellow Creek Mountain Trail Backpack (Short, but strenuous) – Joint with GATC

Hike Description: Short, but strenuous. Join us to explore this 2014 reroute of the BMT onto the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail which was part of the original A.T. route in the late 1940s. The BMT/YCMT goes from Tapoco on US 129 to Fontana Village in NC just south of the Smokies. The 11-mile backpack is not long, but is strenuous with climbs to/from the ridgeline on either end and rolling knobs in between. We can use the time before and after for comfortable commutes and to enjoy pizza at the now hiker-friendly Historic Tapoco Lodge. Contact: Bob Ruby at 404-252-8888 or bmtabob AT gmail.com.

Wednesday, October 7 - Waterfall and Scenic Hike to Benton Falls, Tennessee near Reliance. 3 miles

Hike Description: Easy plus a little detour around McCamy Lake.

The scenery doesn't get any better than this hike. Bring your camera to capture the breath-taking views along the Ocoee Scenic Byway and the spectacular 65-foot waterfall. Please wear your hiking boots to finesse the steps to and from the waterfall, plenty of water, and a dish to share for a POTLUCK PICNIC after hike. We will talk about needed items when signup is complete. Due to popular demand, this hike is almost completely full. Bring water.

For more information and put yourself on the waiting list contact Hike Leader Sara Bland (jsbland AT Windstream.net) or call her at 770-366-6053.

Saturday, October 17 - Section 1 of the BMT(Springer Mt. to Three Forks) 7.1 miles

Hike Description: Average difficulty, mostly downhill. This hike is a good introduction to the BMT and AT. Starting from the Springer Mt. parking lot, we'll hike south on the AT to the start of the BMT, with a short side trip to take in the Springer Mt. summit and start of the AT. There we will see the AT plaque as well as the Springer Mt. shelter. From there, we'll pass by the plaque honoring Benton MacKaye

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at mile 0.1 of the BMT and take the side trail to the George Owen overlook at mile 1.3. After crossing the AT several times, we'll end the hike at Three Forks. Shuttle required. And the usual request, bring plenty of water.

To register, contact Ken Cissna at 706-636-1741 or kcissna AT usf.edu.

10/17 Saturday - 10/18 Sunday - Benton MacKaye Trail Backpack from TAPOCO Lodge to Fontana Dam - Leader Rick Harris

We have a backpack scheduled on the BMT from Tapoco Lodge to Fontana Dam Oct 17-18, a section about **14.5 miles long**, traversing the Yellow Creek Mountain Section of the BMT, which is the original route of the AT. This is a fairly difficult backpack due to the elevation gain and the PUDs (pointless ups and downs). Water may be iffy, so we may have to carry water some distance to our campsite. But such is life.

Plans are to meet at the Fontana Dam parking lot on Saturday at 9 AM, leave what cars we need to leave there, then carpool back to Tapoco Lodge on US 129 near Cheoah Dam. From there we will backpack up Yellow Creek Mountain to camp probably near the powerline crossing. We may need to carry water to our campsite from back a ways on the trail, depending on the water situation when we leave on the trip. So be prepared to haul extra water some distance, probably about 1.5 miles. On Sunday morning we will backpack to the lodge at Fontana Village, then on to the intersection with the AT and out to the south end of Fontana Dam. We will then retrieve our cars at Tapoco Lodge and possibly eat dinner there in their grill (pizza, beer, etc) before heading home.

This is a recently opened section of the BMT after rerouting the trail off US 129 (Tail of the Dragon). Points of interest include Tapoco Lodge itself, the old AT route up Yellow Creek Mountain, a few nice overlooks including Lookout Rock above Fontana Village, Fontana Village itself, and Fontana Lake and Dam. Also you will get to see our newly installed routed wood trail signs along this section, thanks to Dick Evans and the Nantahala National Forest folks as well as an anonymous donor who paid for the signs.

As on the last backpack, all are welcome to spend the Friday night at my house, though be prepared to possibly sleep on the floor with your pad and sleeping bag.

If interested in joining us, please let me know at HarrisRi AT aol.com or 423-253-6358 (home) or 513-260-1184 (cell). Rick Harris TN/NC Representative, BMTA

Note these hikes are considerable driving distances.

Please contribute gas money to your driver when you carpool.

Thank You!

Swinging Bridge Road Closures –The USFS is conducting closures of Forest Service Road 816 off Hwy 60 that leads to the popular swinging bridge over the Toccoa River. The closures are every Monday through Wednesday 6am until noon. There may be additional closures in the future. The closing are part of a logging operation in the area. For more information, contact the Chattahoochee National Forest in Blue Ridge 706 -745-6928. Although the road is being closed, the bridge and trails remain open.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the newsletter! **Next month's deadline is September 23.**