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BMTA Officers 2014-2015

President:	Bob Ruby
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Secretary:	Joy Forehand
Treasurer:	Margaret Evans
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TN/NC M/C:	Open
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Ralph Heller
Membership/Store:	Ken Cissna
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Past President:	David Blount
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State Rep TN/NC:	Rick Harris



BMTA Headquarters



BMTA President's Column - Bob Ruby

I am pleased to report two accolades that the BMT has received:

Men's Journal this month included the BMT on its list of twenty **Once-In-a-Lifetime Backpacking Trips**. There are a few errors in their writeup because the deadline did not allow us a chance to review it, but it is still quite an honor to have been selected. See: <http://www.mensjournal.com/expert-advice/once-in-a-lifetime-backpacking-trips-20150301/benton-mackaye-trail>

The BMT was also listed in the 2014 coffee table book **America's Great Hiking Trails** by Karen Berger under TRAILS TO NEW HORIZONS.

There is an expected surge in interest in backpacking resulting from the movies **Wild** and **A Walk in the Woods** (anticipated summer release). The PCT and A.T. are already experiencing increases in hikers and are planning ways to mitigate overcrowding. It is possible that the BMT will also see an increase in interest. Hiking the BMT is long and challenging enough to be an accomplishment, but not so long that it requires half a year to complete, and it offers more solitude.

Our eternal fame now established, here are several

BMTA Announcements and Business Items:

1. I am sorry to report that we have had two resignations from the BMTA Board:

- George Owen, a founding member of BMTA, decided after 35 years and two recent surgeries that he doesn't feel able to continue serving as BMTA Publicity Director. He plans to continue hiking and to remain on the Corridor Committee. George is welcome to participate in any way he wants as our Emeritus board member.
- Tracy Sheffield resigned as TN/NC Maintenance Director. Rick Harris and Ernie Engman have been temporarily helping with these activities while we identify a replacement.

If you are interested in either of these Board positions or have a suggestion, please let me know.

2. Ernie (SGT Rock) Engman has been appointed Chair of the BMTA Thru-Hiker Committee. Ernie was an original member of the committee when it was created, and he has always been BMTA's key liaison to the long-distance hiker community. He is the author of the **BMT Thru-Hikers' Guide** and was a co-founder of the popular WhiteBlaze.net website.

3. BMTA will participate in two National Trails Day events on June 6. We will join with the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club and the Mountain High Hikers at Vogel State Park. There will also be a Tellico Plains Trail Town event jointly with the local community and several area trail groups. Both events plan a choice of hiking and trail maintenance options, before celebratory meals. More details will be announced in coming months.

4. The Falls Branch Falls and Towee Creek reroutes are progressing nicely. Your help is needed, and please try to bring a friend. The work dates are on the www.bmta.org.

Finally, it is glorious springtime. Get out and enjoy the trail!

Upcoming Hikes ... by Ralph Heller-Hiking Director

April 17,2015 – Grassy Mountain fire tower and Songbird Loop Trail

Length: **Grassy Mountain** - approx. 6 miles – moderate
Songbird Loop – 1.7 miles – Easy Trek

Hike Description: a good tour of the remote Lake Conasauga area adjacent to the southern boundary of the Cohutta Wilderness. Afterward, have a picnic at the Lake Conasauga Pavilion. We plan to have two hikes, the moderate trip to Grassy Mountain fire tower and the easier Songbird Loop Trail.

For more information and to register for the hike for meeting time and location, contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky, email [oldsoldier67 AT gmail.com](mailto:oldsoldier67@gmail.com) or phone (706)889-5254.

Friday May 1 – Lady Slipper Hike

Length: 6.2 miles –moderate/difficult hike

Hike Description: this hike starts at the Fall Branch Falls trail head and finishes at the trail head at Weaver Creek Road. The first half is mostly uphill and the last half is downhill. This time of year there should be a large lady slipper display for several miles on the last half of the hike. Also there should be many wild azaleas in bloom. The hike leader may decide to start the hike at Stanley Gap which will make the hike a little shorter with less uphill climb. Bring lots of water and lunch.

For more information on this hike and to register to get meeting time and location, contact Hike leader Joy Forehand [jwfbga AT gmail.com](mailto:jwfbga@gmail.com) or call (706)946-0336.

Upcoming Hikes ... by Ralph Heller–Hiking Director

Wednesday May 13 – Hike to Toccoa River Suspension Bridge

Length: 3.5 miles with car shuttle – easy/moderate

Hike Description: Hike from GA Highway 60 over Tooni Mountain to 260 ft. pedestrian suspension bridge crossed by the BMT.

For more information on this hike and to register to get meeting time and location, contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna kcissna AT [usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or call (706)636-1741.

Saturday June 6 – National Trails Day Celebration

In Georgia: Meet with BMTA, GATC and Mountain High Hikers at Pavilion 2 at Vogel State Park for morning trail maintenance or hikes – your choice, and then potluck picnic for lunch. For more information contact Ralph Heller phone 770-235-9760

In Tennessee/North Carolina:

Three hikes planned – meet in Tellico Plains Town Square at 9 am.

Trail maintenance at Towee Creek – meet at Quinn Springs Campground shelter at 9am. Campground is on highway 30 west of Reliance.

For more information, contact Rick Harris harrisri AT [aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com) or phone (423)253-6358.

Friday June 12 – Easy Trek Hike to Turtletown Falls

Length: Approx. 4 miles – moderate/easy

Elevation Gain: About 500 ft. from the second falls back to the parking lot

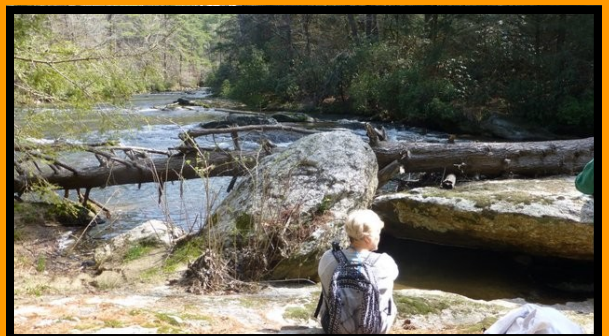
Hike Description: On this loop hike, you get two waterfalls for the price of one hike. The first mile is an easy walk on an old road bed along Turtletown Creek. Then, leaving the road bed, there is a steep descent using switchbacks to get down to the base of the first falls. These falls drop about 25 ft. and are divided at the top by a protruding section of rock. The hike down to the second falls is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile easy walk on a gently sloping grade. At the second falls we will eat lunch. After lunch the hike back follows the old road bed up Shinbone Ridge which overlooks the Hiawasse River below. Bring plenty of water.

For more information on this hike and to register in order to get meeting time and location contact Hike Leader Sara Bland jsbland AT [windstream.net](mailto:jsbland@windstream.net) or call (678)493-2649.

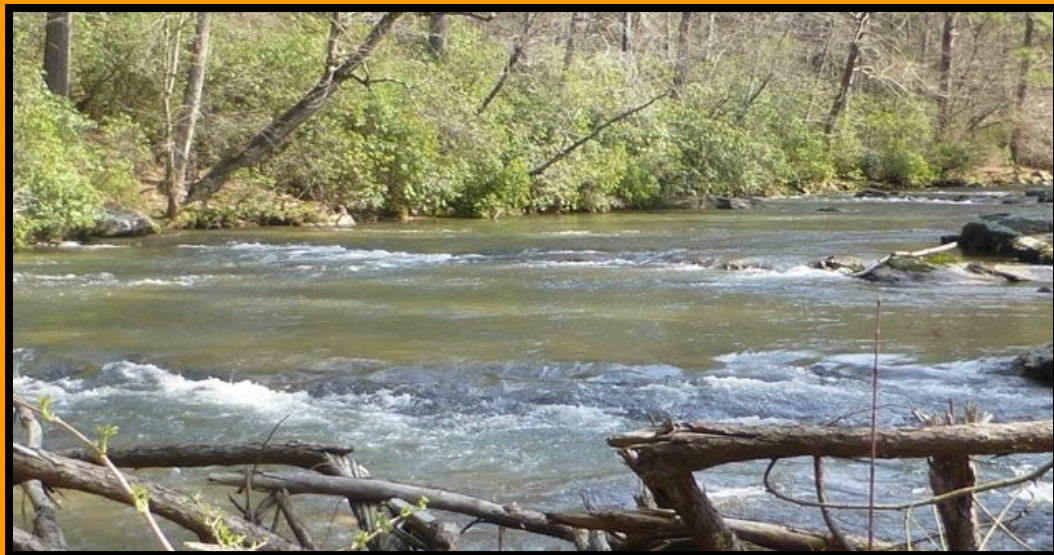
March 18, Cartecay Loop Hike

Ralph Heller – Hike leader

After all the recent bad weather, this Easy Trek hike on March 18 turned out to be an early-spring winner. We had 15 folks on this easy 3.75 mile loop trail which took us down to a beautiful section of the Cartecay River. At the location where the trail first joins the river, we had lunch on some very large flat boulders which are adjacent to and also in the water, a perfect spot to eat a sandwich and enjoy the scenery.



March 18, Cartecay Loop Hike



BMTA Newsflash

Great news! Sara and Jerry Bland are back from Florida and will be helping with and leading some Easy Trek hikes. See the Upcoming Hikes section of this newsletter. Many folks have enjoyed the Easy Trek hikes, a concept Sara proposed.



Georgia Work Trip(s) Report, March 2015

Barry Allen

I remember an advertisement for Doublemint Chewing Gum some years ago that espoused the fun of doubling up on your experiences – for ‘twice the fun’. Well, that’s just what we did in March – two work trips to Fall Branch Falls. And while the work was hard and the terrain was challenging, we had two rewarding trips on the new Fall Branch Trail.

On March 14, fourteen BMTA members and one guest worked all or portions of the day. I NEVER admit to being tired, but after a solid day of battling roots, stumps, and steep hillside, I think many of us were dreaming of a hot bath and a cold beer. In a tribute to $\pi=3.1415$, Darcy Douglas, in a true moment of inspiration, decided that π really equals PECAN, and treated us all to a slice of pie at the end of the day. [Of course, we all know Darcy is a bit nuts at times, to pecans were just the ticket on 3/14/15.](#)



On March 21, twelve Trout Unlimited members, five BMTA stalwarts, three trail runners, and a partridge in a pear tree (Taylor Hamilton), met to continue the battle of Fall Branch Falls. I can't say enough good things about our TU friends for agreeing to put a special trip together to help out on the reroute. Their work was AWESOME, and their attitude was tremendous. Special thanks to Ralph Artigliere with both TU and BMTA for working to set this event up. And thanks would be incomplete without mentioning Jim and Peggy Reich for hosting the entire group for chili and a grand view of the Taccoa at the end of the day. After two March work events, we find ourselves approaching the midway point of our reroute, and looking forward to April 11 and another beautiful day in the woods. Hope to see you all there! And be sure to tune in next month as Ralph Artigliere will share some thoughts and experiences of Trout Unlimited on our trail.

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Georgia Work Trip Report, March 2015



Trailmaking 101: Trout Unlimited Volunteers Take on Fall Branch Reroute

TO: Members of Benton MacKaye Trail Association
FROM: Members of Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited
RE: Fall Branch Reroute Efforts March 21, 2015

Good Friends,

Boy, do we have a lot of respect for your organization and its volunteers. Not only do you maintain your long and winding trail by volunteer effort, you also create new trails and reroute existing trails, which we learned is a lot harder than trail maintenance. Moving the short trail up to Fall Branch Falls is a terrific project which will protect two trout streams from degradation and make the trip to the falls a lot more scenic. For that reason ten of our members joined several members of BMTA and three "trail runners" in a Saturday work day to boost progress you have already made on the new route. The day started at nine, the work ended about one thirty, after which most of us met for chili and cold drinks at the home of Peggy and Jim Reich on the Toccoa near Shallowford Bridge. The lunch was delicious and a great chance for volunteers to get to know their co-workers.

Let's review what we learned about trailmaking. Under the supervision of Barry, Ralph, Darcy, and Taylor, we learned how a side-slope trail is correctly made to BMTA specifications, plus a little extra width because of the usage this section will get. We cut into the hillside, removed rocks and stumps, shored up loose areas, and created a comfortable trail from a tenuous and wild path along the mountain. We found out how much work goes into making a trail, and your leaders found out we were quite effective workers despite our relative ages. Along the way some of us got to talk with trail runners, a different breed of person that most of us had only seen briefly passing us on trails. We learned some of what makes trail runners do what they do, and we earned their respect in the level of effort and output we older volunteers mustered for the good of the trail. The exchange of respect among all the volunteers is perhaps for some an unexpected benefit of this type of volunteerism. From experience we know this phenomenon is not unusual on BMTA projects and in our TU volunteer stream improvement work as well. To all of us, that good will and respect becomes a value-added benefit of the volunteer experience, which may be one reason we get volunteers who come back repeatedly despite the hard work. In fact, the mutual respect may be a direct result of the effort we expend.

On Sunday, we were sore but content in a job well-done as partners with the BMTA and the US Forest Service. With pride I attach a photo of the section of the trail I helped create.



Ralph Artigliere ...Education Director ...Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited

Trout Unlimited Volunteers ... Thank you

TU volunteers:

Thanks to each of you for your terrific efforts for Fall Branch yesterday. We hope you will visit there after the trail is done to see what we accomplished. Creating a trail for others to follow in such difficult but beautiful terrain is quite exhilarating and hopefully will be something you remember for a long time. We met some new friends and made some great progress on the trail. Our supervisor Barry Allen was very complimentary of our skill and work ethic.

Many thanks to our gracious hosts Jim and Peggy Reich for their wonderful Chili spread and terrific location for post-labor fellowship and for Lynn for helping as well.

Photos are courtesy of Allen Sacks. He managed to make the work look just as hard as it was yesterday... but everyone is still smiling! Thank you friends!

Ralph Heller