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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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BMTA President's Column May 2015

More Praise for BMT

It's always nice to hear praise about your baby. BMTA recently received 300-Miler forms from two experienced backpackers (James Yurchenco and Amy Lauterbach from Palo Alto, CA) who thru-hiked the BMT during last April. They are also authors who contribute to Backpacking Light and alerted us to their article on the BMT. They had a lot of nice things to say about the BMT, especially noting the solitude that they enjoyed when compared to the March mobs on the southern portion of the A.T. Interestingly they took the new Slickrock Reroute before it was official in order to avoid a high-water crossing of Slickrock Creek. You can read their article at: http://www.backpackinglight.com/cgi-bin/backpackinglight/forums/thread_display.html?forum_thread_id=103258

Trail Maintenance Needed

In spite of the accolades from our April hikers, we have had reports of briars and blowdowns on the trail. Most of our scheduled workdays have been focused on the significant reroutes at Fall Branch Falls and Towee Creek, but the rest of the trail is growing. Unlike the Far West, our rains will result in a lot of growth this year. I strongly encourage everyone to maintain your individual sections and to support the ad-hoc work days being organized for the remote sections that no one has adopted yet. (Heart of Darkness or Yellow Creek Mountain Trail, anyone?) Our annual walk-thru is planned for July, but don't wait to be told that your section is overgrown.

Two Bills in Congress Worth Supporting

Tennessee Wilderness Act (S.755) – BMTA has long supported this Act which would upgrade several parts of the Cherokee National Forest that the BMT passes through or near, from Wilderness Study Areas to permanently protected Designated Wilderness Areas. The Act is sponsored by Tennessee's two Republican Senators, Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker. I recently wrote to Congressman Chuck Fleischmann {R-TN-3} asking him to introduce a companion bill in the House of Representatives. This seems to be a good time to encourage passage as there is a ground-swell of support, and I encourage you to contact your representatives to express support. You can get a good feel for the situation by reading this article: <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/opinion/times/story/2015/mar/23/wilderness-act-will-fourth-time-be-charm/294594/>

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Land Adjustment Act of 2015 (H.R.470) – This Bill is designed to get the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest out of 3800 acres of isolated properties and to allow use of the proceeds to purchase contiguous lands which would be easier for the Forest Service to manage. The BMTA Corridor Committee is in preliminary discussions with the Forest Service and some private property owners to move some of our remaining road walks into the woods. While we have no guarantees that the proceeds of this Bill would be used to enhance the BMT, it makes sense to sell these isolated parcels and retain the funds so that they “... shall be available to the Secretary until expended, without further appropriation, for the acquisition of land for National Forest purposes in the State of Georgia.” This short bill can be read at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/470>. Please thank Congressman Doug Collins [R-GA-9] for introducing the bill and encourage your congressional representatives to support it.

New Congressional Trails Caucus

New Trails Caucus in House - Coincidentally, after writing the above two items, I received the AHS announcement about the new caucus. We don't yet know how effective it will be, it is worth giving it a try when supporting trails legislation. Congressman Graves' Northeast Georgia district (R-GA-13) doesn't include any of the BMT, but it is close. See below for details. Let's do what we can to support this effort.

Dear Bob,

It's official! The new Congress has a Trails Caucus! The mission of the Caucus is to provide a forum for Members of Congress to work together for the creation and conservation of our natural landscape and recreation activities through the preservation of trails. The co-chairs (for whom we are very grateful and who deserve our applause) are Reps. Blumenauer (D-OR), Fortenberry (R-NE), Nolan (D-MN), and Graves (R-GA).

What I'd like to ask *you* to do is to email or call your Representative in Congress, tell them that trails are important to you and that you would like them to consider becoming a member of the Trails Caucus. It'd be great if you could mention a particular trail you enjoy that is in his or her district. If you are in the district of one of the four co-chairs, no need to ask but an email thanking them would be most welcome I'm certain.

Be sure to let them know that to join the Caucus, they can just contact Paul Balmer in Rep. Blumenauer's office at x(5-4811) or Alan Feyerherm in Rep. Fortenberry's office at x(5-4806).

That's it! So let's get 'em on board a Caucus that's good for you, good for them (after all, trails *are* fun!), and good for America. Thank you for helping.

Peter Olsen

Vice President for Programs and Government Relations

Edwin Dale finds the Great Trail in the Sky, May 22, 2015

By Darcy Douglas

Dr. Edwin Dale served as President of the BMTA for most of the first five years of the organization. However, he wasn't just president. He also was newsletter editor, membership director, planned the work trips (which were held without fail on the second Saturday of every month, a date chosen with sister club GATC to avoid conflicts), created all our early maps of the trail, and, most importantly, forged a positive relationship with the United States Forest Service at the regional, forest, and district levels. In those days, positive relations weren't what most people thought of when they discussed volunteers and the bureaucracy. Edwin's low-key, humorous approach to practical matters won over nay-sayers on a regular basis. He was able to find approval to put the BMT where it is today in Georgia, at a time when Wilderness areas were expanding and the thought of putting trails in them was not generally considered.

Edwin was constantly on the lookout for new people interested in trails to help out with the Benton MacKaye work trips. His charming approach netted the organization enough people to eventually fill out the Board of Directors so he didn't have to do every task himself. Gradually, under his leadership, folks took over the newsletter, created new maps of the trail, began to handle the finances, created a database for the membership, and supervised work trips. Edwin also led the first week-long work trip for the club, and it was on Scroggin Knob! We stayed in his first mountain cabin, and started the tradition of eating at the Pink Pig that week. He led work trips on Scroggin for an entire year until that section was completed. He also cleaned all the tools, arranged for their sharpening, and held them between work trips for many years. He planned our first long-term planning meeting which was held at Simpsonwood. His leadership skills were always there, even though people might not have noticed he was getting them to do what he wanted. He managed the BMTA in such a way as to let new people ease their way in and take on the tasks for which they were best suited.

Once there were enough capable people to handle running the club, Edwin began to volunteer for the USFS. Eventually, he began to work part-time with them. After retiring from Emory University, he became a full-time USFS employee. Even then, this fine man kept our trail in his sights. He was able to work with us from the opposite side of the table to keep things moving along smoothly. His presence and ability to deal with people kindly enabled much of the growth of the trail and the organization over those early years.

In truth, there was nothing Edwin didn't do to help our great trail get on the ground and become known in the Southeast. He even licked the stamps to mail those newsletters, after typing out the labels on a typewriter!

Dr. Dale was a professor at Emory, and his research was done from an office behind Grady Hospital. He published the research in which he was involved when we met, on the topic of female runners. There wasn't much out there at the time on this topic, so it was groundbreaking. He would meet runners while he ran to add to his research base. Edwin was married to Barbara, and helped her raise their 3 daughters while doing all he did for our trail. He was an amazing person whose gentle spirit belied the energy and intellect behind the calm demeanor.

In his later years, Edwin moved to Athens, GA. He didn't stop to rest, though. He read science books on tape for the blind and later served as a trainer there. He took up bicycling, he became a Master Gardner involved with the State Botanical Gardens, and he became active in the Unitarian-Universalist Association. He helped lay out a trail at their facility. He also always took pleasure in the Jack Russell terriers they kept around the house. Edwin kept busy, and always was supportive of our trail, until his illness began in the fall of 2014, about the time he turned 81. His wife, Barbara, passed away several years ago, as did their one beloved grandson Michael, but the three girls survive their parents. Jennifer, Laura, and Terri have supported their father to the end. Edwin is also survived by his partner and dear friend Elizabeth Bishop-Martin of Athens.

This stalwart leader, Edwin Dale, stands higher than most in making the Benton MacKaye Trail a reality! He deserves the honor and respect of all who have ever hiked this trail!!!

National Trails Day 2015!
To Include a Tribute to Margaret Drummond
Where: Vogel State Park, Pavilion #2
When: June 6, 2015

Join in the fun at Vogel State Park for the annual celebration of National Trails Day! Activities will include trail work in Georgia's favorite state park and on USFS land nearby, family friendly hikes, an invasive plant eradication project, a covered dish luncheon, and a brief program. Please bring a dish to share. Members of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA), Mountain High Hikers (MHH), and Georgia Forest Watch (GFW) will join forces to host this event. National Trails Day was started in 1993 by the National Hiking Society as an annual event to emphasize the importance of the National Trails System and to encourage trail use, stewardship, and outdoor recreation.

Schedule of Events

- 9:00 – 12:00 Trail work on the Bear Hair Trail
- Co-Leaders: Lawson Herron and Marion McLean – GATC
- 9:00 – 12:00 Invasive Plant Eradication at Neels Gap (eradication of oriental bittersweet)
- Leader: Laura Northrup – GATC
- 9:00 – 12:00 Family Friendly Hikes (open to the public)
- Co-Leaders: Darcy Douglas and Ken Cissna – BMTA
- 12:00 – 1:30 Covered Dish Luncheon with program during lunch
- Co-Leaders: Nancy Lovingood and Kathy Chastain – GATC, Candy Retter - MHH

Luncheon Program:

- Welcoming Remarks (brief)
- Welcome to Vogel: Cliff Tippens – Vogel State Park Manager
- USFS: Andy Baker, District Ranger, BRRD
- GATC: Beth Rothermel, President
- BMTA: Bob Ruby, President
- MHH: Michael O'Brien, President
- SEFTC: Darcy Douglas, President
- GFW: TBA
- Presentation – Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) Charlie Smillie – SAWS Field Supervisor

- 1:30 – 3:00 Club-specific meetings as needed
- GATC Prospective Member Orientation
- 1:30 – until Enjoy the lake, go fishing, go hiking, visit with hiking pals!

Please come prepared for your activity of choice. Bring work gloves, sturdy shoes or boots, water, snack, etc Plan ahead to keep hot food hot and cold food cold, for safety prior to the meal. Bring a folding chair or two as seating may be limited during the luncheon.

June 7, 2015 Save Georgia's Hemlocks

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 SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS
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 KINDRED SPIRITS TO CELEBRATE AND PRESERVE
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ETC PAVILION • ON THE BANKS OF THE COOSAWATTEE RIVER • ELLIJAY, GA

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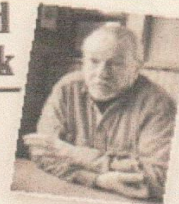


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COME HEAR Keynote Speaker - Dr. Richard McDonald Premier Researcher of All Things Hemlock



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TRIP REPORT - BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL SECTIONS 6C & 6D – MAY 1, 2015

By Clayton Webster

Pictures courtesy of Clayton Webster

Ten Benton MacKaye Trail Association members enjoyed a pink lady slipper hike on Sections 6C & 6D on the Benton MacKaye Trail on May 1, 2015. We were led by Joy Forehand on the 6.2 mile hike (including a side lunch stop to the top of Rocky Mountain). Joy had scouted the trail the week before and was sure we would see the pink lady slippers at their peak. And we did, hundreds of them all along the trail and up the hillsides.



Ready to hit the trail are L-R: Joy Forehand, Kathy Williams, Frank Forehand, Sherry Petraoli, Helen Daniels, Marcia Lehman, Clare Sullivan, Clayton Webster, and Ralph Heller. Ken Cissna is in behind.

The hike began at the Stanley Gap trailhead off Stanley Creek Road. After six tenths of a mile, Stanley Gap joined the BMT as the BMT ascends from Fall Branch Falls and continued on sections 6C and 6D of the BMT to Weaver Creek Road.

The hike required a shuttle. The BMT used to go past the beautiful Fall Branch Falls, but the Forest Service has decided that the trail was getting pretty badly eroded in the area leading up to the falls. The BMT is currently being rerouted with lots of switchbacks to access the falls. It was a disappointment to not see the falls as it is one of the more beautiful ones in the area.

Our next waypoint was the intersection where the Stanley Gap Trail turned right down to the Aska Road parking lot. We had been on the BMT and the Stanley Gap Trail together since the BMT came up from the waterfall. Early in the hike we saw some really beautiful flame azalea in bloom and several mountain laurel bushes ready to pop out. But then we did not see any azaleas or mountain laurel that looked like they would bloom until much later into the hike. But what we did see was the most Catesby's trillium any of us could remember on a trail. There also were lots of yellow star grass, Mayapples, trillium grandiflorum, ferns of all types, and the star of the show: pink lady slippers everywhere. We even saw a very rare white lady slipper.



This part of the trail that is the Stanley Gap Trail is also a bike trail, and we did meet a couple of fast moving cyclers. We met a group of hikers, and trail dog Maggie, having lunch at one of the three campsites on this section of the BMT. We later met another hiker coming up from Weaver Creek. He told us we had a real treat in store for the second half of the hike with the lady slippers and flame azaleas in bloom.

Continued on next page

The high point of the BMT on Section 6C is 3,350 feet where the side trail goes up to the top of Rocky Mountain which is around 3,400 feet. Last week, Joy hacked out a path through some briars for us to reach the peak. It was a great lunch spot with views out in two directions. We could look out at Rich Mountain and Cold Mountain as the leaves were not yet out on the trees at this elevation. The Mayapples on top were in full bloom though. The ones we'd seen along the trail had already finished blooming.

As we were going downhill, we passed a manway that led off to an old homesite. There were a couple of rock cairns there to mark the way down to where the old home place had been. There were not many streams on this section of the BMT, but this is where there was a water source for the old settlers.

The pink lady slippers were at their absolute peak



Clayton, in his Tennessee orange, looks color coordinated with the flame azaleas in bloom.



Above is the Trillium Grandiflorum. They come out white and turn pink as they mature. So here we have a young one and an older one, both still in perfect shape.

After going downhill for a while, we then had to head back uphill to the top of 2,770 foot Scroggin Knob. From here almost to end of the hike we would see lady slippers almost every few minutes. One of the biggest concentrations of them was near a turn off to a water source and campsite that also is being considered as part of a reroute of the trail to avoid going on private land and along a road between Weaver Creek and Highway 515. It was along this section we began to see lots and lots of flame azalea and also mountain laurel ready to pop out in bloom. We had three of the trail maintainers for this part of the BMT on the hike. Joy and Frank Forehand maintain Section 6C and Ralph Heller maintains 6D that ends at Weaver Creek. Needless to say, the entire trail was in great shape. Joy, Frank, and Ralph are fortunate to have a mountain biker live nearby who is also a certified sawyer. He often has blow downs cleared out before they are ever reported. Part of the trail even looked like Ralph had carried pine straw in to place on the trail. It was very nice and soft to walk on for a pretty long stretch.

After the hike, many of the hikers headed to the Pink Pig in Cherry Log for some BBQ. Clayton went on down the road to Poole's Pig Hill of Fame in East Ellijay for his BBQ.

Many thanks to Joy for leading the hike. Thanks also to Ken for passing back along the trail all the information about the many wildflowers we were seeing along the trail. Ralph Heller is always a great resource of information on any trail we travel. Thanks to all the people who volunteered to drive us to the two trailheads so we could do the shuttle.

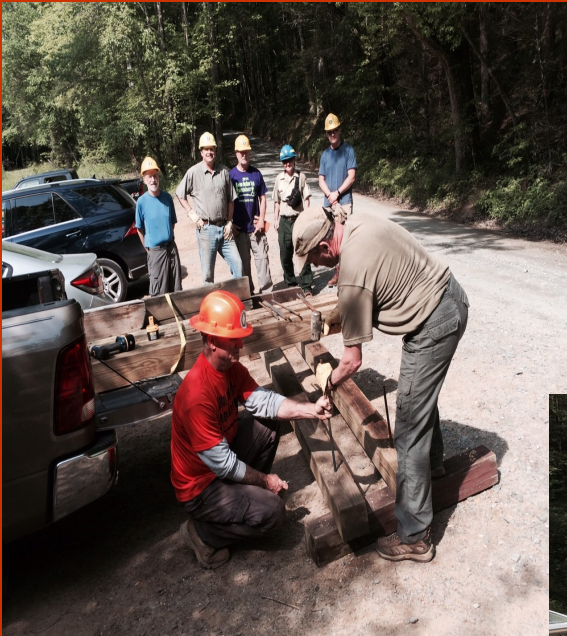
Georgia Work Trip Report, May 2015

By Barry Allen

I have a confession to make: I am in my role as Georgia Maintenance Director for my ability to swing a Pulaski, and not my gray matter. On the second Saturday of May, our group of eight stood by the tailgate of Mark Yost's truck, scratching our heads about the best way to carry HEAVY 6x6 pressure treated timbers in to the work site at Fall Branch. Finally, Bob Cowdrick had the right plan: drill the timbers, drive a two foot section of rebar through each end, and use the rebar as handles for a four man team on each timber. Excellent! It worked like a charm.

Foreground: Mark Yost, Bob Cowdrick

Background: from left Paul Brame, Barry Allen, Ralph Heller, Taylor Hamilton, Don Kenny and photo by Tom Keene



Our work for the day was heavy in the 'beast of burden' role, carrying timbers for cribbing on a steep section of trail. Each four man team made four or five trips with timbers – almost two miles of walking – uphill in both directions, while fighting off blinding snow and sleet. OK, maybe I exaggerate. But it was a good workout! We rested our digging muscles on this Saturday, but sure tested our walking muscles.



We also played with a new toy after lunch: a reciprocating saw purchased to help remove some of the large roots and stumps along the new section of trail. Ralph Heller and Don Kenny put this new tool to work, while Bob Cowdrick began the slow job of making gravel for use as backfill on the cribbing. And Taylor Hamilton worked to set the first timbers in place.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Don Kenny, a non-member who for the second time drove two hours from the Atlanta area to help with the reroute. Also, the previously mentioned Mark Yost deserves a slap on the back for volunteering to pick up a truck load of timbers from the Forest Service. And after working to carry the timbers, Mark and Paul Brame drove to section 7 to work on a blow down. Good Job. Taylor Hamilton (USFS), Tom Keene, and Ralph Heller rounded out the eight man team for the day. Fall Branch will not see our hot, sweaty faces in June as we work at Vogel for National Trails Day. And in July, we are planning a BMTA trail walk through. But the work will be there in the future. So come and join us when you can!

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip on Sycamore Creek Section

May 2, 2015 by Rick Harris

13 of us worked on the Sycamore Creek section of the BMT just north of the Tellico River crossing on Saturday, May 2. It was a beautiful warm sunny day. Four workers (Ken Jones, Tom Smith, Phyllis Jones, and John Zardis) went down from the top with chainsaw and brush cutters and cleared the upper 3 miles of the trail. The rest of us came in from the bottom with chain saw, brush cutters, and loppers and swing blades to clear the lower 3 miles of the trail. Surprisingly, there were not very many fresh logs across the trail and the trail vegetation was not too bad.

BMTA Work Trip on Section North River Road to Beech Gap May 3, 2015

by Rick Harris

Brenda Harris and Richard Harris cleared trees and vegetation from the BMT for the first half mile from North River Road north toward Beech Gap on Sunday, May 3. We had reports of trees down on this section. Indeed, there were about 10 trees across the trail, all were dead hemlocks. We removed all of these and we also cut back the briars some as well. While working, a thru-hiker Collin Chambers came through and we took her to our house for dinner, a shower and good night's sleep. On the way back, we also stopped at the Unicoi Crest Overlook and removed a tree right by the road on the trail going south. In total, we worked about 3 hours. Driving time was 2 hours.

JUNE WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT – BMTA

Please join us as we celebrate National Trails Day at Vogel State Park, Saturday, June 6. (See article for work/hike event details) There will be no additional work event in June; however, several of us have signed up for chain saw certification classes being held on our normal second Saturday in the Blue Ridge and Chattooga River Ranger Districts.

ANNUAL WALK THRU – JULY 11

In lieu of a July work date, our annual trail walk thru evaluation will be held on Saturday, July 11. Please send me a note now to reserve your section of trail, or to volunteer for shuttle duty to help out our hikers. Also in July, we will have a number of youngsters (late teens) from the Youth Conservation Corps working at Fall Branch Falls. The likely date for the YCC work event is Tuesday, July 7 thru Friday, July 10. If you would like to help guide or direct these youngsters (or even grill some burgers for these hard workers), then please let me know: [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com)

Appreciation for Outgoing Newsletter Editor Gene Nix

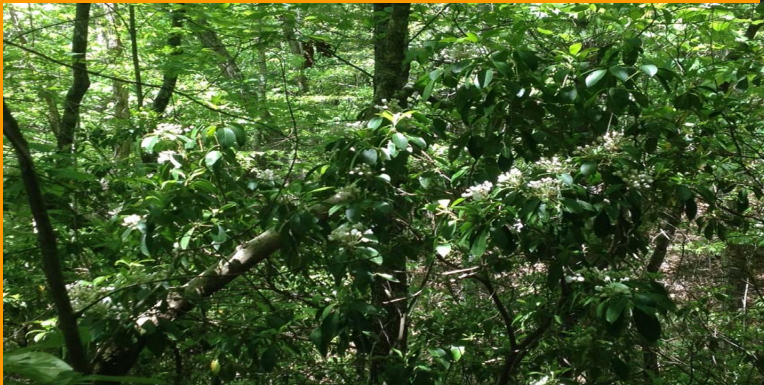
The BMTA extends its thanks for the hard work and dedication of Gene Nix as Newsletter Editor. He has been instrumental in keeping us informed of the wide reach and impact of the BMTA through pictures and articles contributed by BMTA members. New to the job of Newsletter Editor is Kathy Williams who just recently retired and moved to Blue Ridge. She lives only a few yards from the BMT in her cabin in the mountains. As this newsletter is her first do not hesitate to complain, whine, rage etc. She gratefully accepts it all. [mwill148 AT georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:mwill148@georgiasouthern.edu)

BMTA Hike Hwy 60 To Toccoa River Suspension Bridge

May 13, 2015 by Ken Cissna

On May 13th, 10 BMTA members and 4 guests enjoyed an entertaining 3.5 mile hike from Hwy 60 over Toonowee Mountain to the 260 ft. Suspension Bridge on the Toccoa River. On route hikers were joined briefly by a snake, who may or may not have been on his or her way to the bridge. It was unclear if the snake was a BMTA member or guest.

Mountain Laurels were just beginning to bloom.



Wild Azaleas were still to be seen

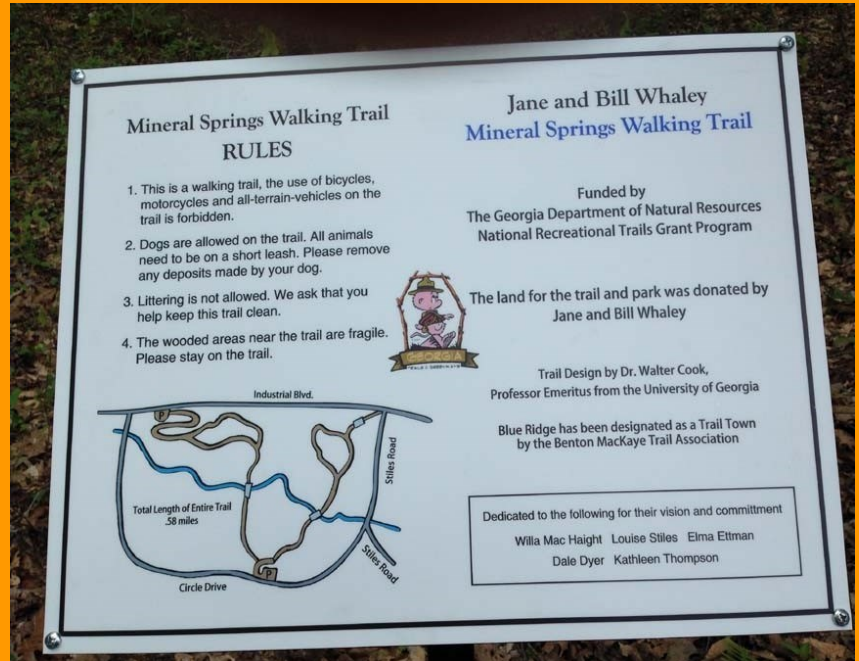


Ken Cissna served as hike leader with Larry Brannon as sweep. We lunched on the banks of the river and ended the day with a short hike to the shuttled cars on FS 816. Perfect weather added to the enjoyment of a day in the mountains!

Front left to right-Carol Donaldson, Bob Brown, David Ford, Kathy Williams
Middle left to right-Shirley Smith, Ralph Heller, Sara Bland, Larry Brannon
Back left to right-Ben Hairston, Ken Cissna, Dee Catallo, Jerry Bland, Martha Fowler

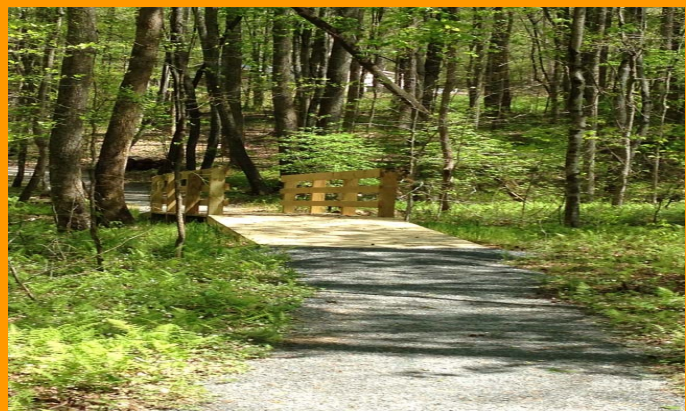
New Trail in Blue Ridge by Joy Forehand

The dedication of the Jane and William Whaley Mineral Springs Walking Trail was held April 22, 2015, at the Mineral Springs trailhead in Blue Ridge, GA. Jane and Bill Whaley, Willa Mac Haight, Louise Stiles, Elma Ettman, Dale Dyer and Kathleen Thompson were credited with making the trail a reality. Located at the intersection of Mineral Springs Road and Church Street, the 13-acre plot of land was donated to the City of Blue Ridge by Jane and William Whaley. Because the land is within the city limits, it was the perfect location for a small park ... especially for the city's senior residents who may require a handicapped accessible walkway



Speakers at the ceremony included Blue Ridge Mayor Donna Whitener and Kathleen Thompson. Because Blue Ridge is a Benton MacKaye Trail Town, Joy and Frank Forehand represented BMTA at the event.

In fact, BMTA member, Walter Cook, designed the .58-mile / four-foot wide trail which offers residents the opportunity to enjoy the trail's butterfly garden, majestic Oak trees, Flame Azaleas, Catesby Trilliums, Grandiflorum Trilliums, Mountain Laurel and large beds of luxurious ferns nestled along a meandering creek. In the early 1900's tourists as well as Blue Ridge residents were drawn to the spring, hoping to be healed by the water that is rich in magnesium and iron. To accommodate the numerous visitors, a large pavilion was erected adjacent to one of the springs on the property. The marble base still remains, but due to environmental considerations, the trail had to be routed away from that location. The group that worked to develop the newly dedicated trail eventually hopes to construct another trail that will lead to the site of the original pavilion. The trail's construction was funded by a grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for a total cost of \$100,000. Jeff Holloway of Holloway Trenching LLC constructed the walking trail.



A Frustration for Maintainers ! by Darcy Douglas

A couple of weeks ago, after a pretty tiring day of work with the GAAS stream monitoring we do at Three Forks, four of us had agreed to gather our chain saws and gear, and trek uphill a mile and a half to complete the cutting of the one log on the section of BMT I've maintained for most of the last 30 years. We carried 2 saws in case one had a problem like last time, the oil, gas, and tools for them, hard hats, chaps, goggles, ear protection, water and first aid equipment. I stress the amount of gear we carried as well as our having already worked all day to make the point.

When we arrived at the log, we found someone else had already cut it!!!

No one had contacted me or the Maintenance Chairperson to let us know they had cut my one log.

Someone must have been just walking around on my section of trail, with a chain saw, since I had gone to great trouble not to tell other sawyers it was there, having already made these arrangements to cut it.

There was a log needing to be cut on Gilbert's section, so we could have gone there instead. Or we could have cut down the tree on the AT which was leaning. Or we could have done a number of other things needed on the BMT.

Instead, we wasted a great deal of time and a great deal of energy.

Please - you are NOT helping when you randomly do trail maintenance. When I drive 2.5 hours one way to get to the trail head to do the work I planned to do, on the section assigned to me, and carry the tools in the distance, it is more than a little frustrating to find someone has already done the work. I could have brought OTHER tools had I but known. I wouldn't have wasted an entire day.

We assign trail maintainers to care for a section, to be stewards of it, to know it well, and know what will be needed when in the growing season and after storms. It is discouraging when you realize you have wasted your time and energy in the pursuit of the goal of being a good steward.

If you WANT to maintain trail, contact the maintainer!!! We are all listed on the BMTA.org website. Or contact the Maintainer Chairperson for the area you wish to be in. Or go on a work trip each month. All of us can use help from time to time, and some of us even enjoy the company! But we do not enjoy wasting our time. With all there is needed to keep a section in good shape for all the possible hikers who might come there, spending that time efficiently is vital.

I hope the person who did this, with all good intentions, is reading this and can now understand how your actions affect others, however kind you thought you were being.

As a result of having put the 3 other people in this position, I felt very guilty (though there was no way I could have known – we don't use drones for such things) and ended up having to buy treats for them on the way home. So if you "fess up", you can take me out for a treat! Or come HELP me maintain my section. Thank you, on behalf of all who maintain sections of the trail...

Upcoming Hikes by Ralph Heller-Hiking Director

Saturday, June 6 – National Trail Days Celebrations

In Georgia: Meet starting at 9 am 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. See articles in this newsletter and last month's newsletter for more information.

In Tennessee/North Carolina: Three hikes are planned, including **Bald River Trail, Fall Branch Falls Trail, and Unicoi Turnpike National Historic Trail.** Hiker's meet at 9 AM at Cherochala Skyway Visitor Center.

For trail maintenance on the BMT/JMT meet at Quinn Springs Campground shelter at 9am. Campground is on Highway 30 west of Reliance. Breakfast provided by TN Wild before we go out and work, then a supper provided by the Tellico Outpost along with hamburgers, etc provided by the Friends of the Cherokee National Forest. Free tshirts for workers, \$5 tshirts for hikers.

I am hoping to see participation by several groups as before, such as the BMTA, Cherokee Hiking Club, SEFTC, Tennessee Wild, SAWS, SABCH, Chattanooga Hiking Club, Sequoyah Hiking Club and the USFS as well as the town of Tellico Plains. For more information, contact Rick Harris harrisri AT [aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com) or phone [\(423\)253-6358](tel:(423)253-6358)

Friday, June 12 – Easy Trek to Turtletown Falls

Length: Approx. 4 miles – moderate/easy

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

Hike Description: On this loop hike you get two waterfalls for 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 a ¾ mile easy walk on a gently sloping grade. At the second falls we will eat lunch. After lunch, the hike back follows an old road bed up Shinbone Ridge with the Hiwassee River valley to the left below. Bring Plenty of water.

This hike is full, but if you would like to be on the wait list in case of cancellations, contact Sara Bland (jsbland AT Windstream.net or call [\(678\)493-2649](tel:(678)493-2649)).

Saturday, July 18 – Hike on BMT Section 11e from FS221 to Thunder Rock Campground and then on to Ocoee Whitewater Center via Rhododendron Trail

Length: Section 11e is 3.4 miles easy downhill. Rhododendron Trail is a 1.6 mile easy level walk along the Ocoee River.

Hike Description: This Easy Trek hike starts at the intersection of FS 221 and the BMT (the beginning of BMT Section 11e going north). It is a nice easy downhill to the Ocoee River. The hike then follows the river upstream to the Whitewater Center with good views of the river, rafters and kayakers negotiating the rapids. There are picnic tables along the river for lunch. Bring lots of water.

For information on this hike and register to get meeting time and location contact Hike Leader Ralph Heller (rshbmta AT gmail.com or call [770-235-9760](tel:770-235-9760)).

Friday, August 14 – Waterfall trail hikes (Dukes Creek Falls and Raven Cliff Falls)

Length: Dukes Creek 2.2 easy miles in and out, Raven Cliff 5 miles in and out – easy to moderate

Hike Description: On this day there will be multiple waterfalls. We will warm up with an easy hike on a paved trail to Dukes Creek Falls, a 250 ft. drop. From the Dukes Creek parking lot, it is a short drive to the Raven Cliff trailhead. The Raven Cliff Trail provides four waterfalls, an unnamed 10 footer, an unnamed 35 footer, and upper and lower Raven Cliff Falls. The lower falls, called Raven Cliff Grotto is a cleft in the cave like walls where the water tumbles 40 ft. At the falls area there is also the impressive Raven Cliffs, which are up to 125 feet above the creek. Bring water, bring lunch and bring your camera.

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](tel:706-889-5254)).

Note: On most of our hikes, we carpool to the site. Once we get there, we often do a shuttle from the end point of the hike back to the starting point. It would be a nice gesture if folks who are riding help chip in for gas.

A Walk in the Woods - the movie

By Bob Ruby

The movie version of the popular book A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson is scheduled for release on September 2. You can see the trailer at <https://www.facebook.com/moviefone/videos/vb.34489818507/10153886760788508/?type=2&theater>.

This movie and the book and movie Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail by Cheryl Strayed are inspiring a number of new long distance hikers. BMTA recently received a request for guidance from a "beginner" who wants to start her hiking career with a thru-hike of the BMT. When we suggested starting with a less ambitious overnight hike, she responded "I have to do this!" Good luck to her. We are trying to position the BMT as best positioned for at least moderately experienced backpackers who know how to read a map and will be able to follow the trail in wilderness areas where we aren't allowed to blaze.

Donations Help With Trail Work

By Ralph Heller

While working on the new Fall Branch reroute, we ran into great difficulty removing roots and stumps. Due to the terrain, there was the need for almost constant side hilling building this section of trail. And since this section of new trail needed to be wider, due to heavy traffic from persons visiting the falls, much more digging than usual was required.

One of the big problems was removing stumps and roots that pass through the path of the trail during the excavating process. After seeing folks struggle with this problem, we had a brainstorming session to see how we might make the job easier. Chainsaw use was rejected because of the requirement of having to run the chain in the dirt – a good way to ruin the chain. It was suggested that we might use a battery powered reciprocating saw. On the following trip we used an 18v reciprocating saw lent to us by Travis Crouch, a BMTA member and owner of North Georgia Mountain Outfitters in Ellijay. The saw worked well on the smaller roots, but the old batteries ran down rather quickly. We learned that the saw was especially useful because the blade would penetrate the earth and cut roots that were difficult to access with an axe or Pulaski. The expendable wood pruning blades were easy to change and inexpensive. We reported the results to Travis who then donated his saw to the BMTA. Based on the positive experience we had with this saw, it was decided to purchase a more powerful Milwaukee Sawzall. This purchase was made possible by a Trail Maintenance Fund created as a result of dues and generous donations made by many folks to the BMTA for use in trail maintenance.

The Sawzall we purchased was the Milwaukee M28 Reciprocating Saw Kit which included two 28v Lithium batteries. It had a top rating on web sites and included a 5-year warranty.



On the May 9 work trip, the saw was put into action. Both 9 and 12 inch pruning blades were used. Small roots cut like butter. Several stumps in the trail were removed and one very large root that could not successfully be removed previously with an axe or Pulaski came out with the Sawzall. We were also able to cut quite a few small saplings flush with the ground on the side of the trail. Both batteries were drained in the process, but we gave the saw quite a workout in the process.

Based on the performance of the new saw, our work on building and repairing trails will be much easier than before. It is a great addition to our arsenal of tools. In addition, we will also be using the older 18v reciprocating saw as a backup. We purchased new batteries from the

maintenance fund for this saw also.

Thanks to everyone for supporting the work we do on the trail. The Fall Branch reroute will require quite a few more work trips. Come out and join us. We need all the help we can muster for this project.

