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BMTA President's Column November 2015

Annual Meeting

We had a great 35th Anniversary Meeting and dinner. You can read about the highlights elsewhere in this Newsletter. I want to especially thank the Planning Committee of **Tom Keene**, **Darcy Douglas** and **George Owen** for the fabulous job that they did organizing and orchestrating the event.

New and Outgoing Board Members

Three new members are joining the BMTA Board:

- **Peter Busscher** (Conservation Director), an Atlanta attorney that we are thrilled to have.
- **Larry Dumas** (GA State Representative), coming off an extended period of Boy Scouts leadership.
- **Ken Jones** (TN/NC Maintenance Director), who is resuming the job he did so well during construction of the TN/NC portion of the BMT and relieving Rick Harris who has done yeoman work in this position for eight years. Rick filled in as Acting Maintenance Director last year, and is reverting to his official Board position as TN/NC State Representative.
- **Mike Pilvinsky** (Hiking Director). Mike is off to a great start on the 2016 hiking program.

You will see bios for each and be hearing from them in upcoming newsletters. In addition Marge Heller has agreed to come back from semi-retirement and share the Publicity management job with Marcia Lehman. See below for the conditions of Marcia's return. We now have two of our best ever doing this critical job.

Three members are leaving the Board, but will continue their active service in BMTA:

- **Steve Bayliss** (Conservation Director), who has done an exceptional job representing the BMT with respect to large events and other Special Use Permits affecting the Trail. Steve will mentor Peter in the transition and continue to maintain his section of Section 8.
- **Ralph Heller** (Hiking Director), who turbocharged the hiking program in North Georgia during his tenure resulting in many BMTA new members and maintainers. Ralph continues as Chair of the active Corridor Committee working to eliminate the BMT's remaining road walks and Georgia maintenance numbers keeper for Barry Allen.

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:	Ken Jones
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Mike Pilvinski
Membership/Store:	Ken Cissna
Publicity:	Marcia Lehman Marge Heller
Conservation:	Peter Busscher
Past President:	David Blount
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
State Rep GA:	Larry Dumas
State Rep TN/NC:	Rick Harris



BMTA Headquarters

- **Mark Yost** (Georgia State Representative), who has been an active Board member and assisted me in developing an emergency contacts list for the whole BMT which will be on the website shortly. Mark will continue his leadership in BMTA by being one of our new District Leaders dividing up management of the TN/NC trail area, so not all the oversight work will fall on Ken. More on this organizational evolution will come shortly.

Events Volunteers Needed!

In order to help Marge and Marcia, as they take on this responsibility for publicity and promotion, we promised to recruit a team of members who will help staff the BMTA tent at various community events in 2016. The BMTA participates in these events to help get the word out on the BMT, but these events also play a big role in finding new, active members. **Please let Marcia or Marge know if you are willing to take a shift staffing a booth(s) or have any questions.** We need a minimum of two members for each shift, so join in the fun as we tell folks about our trail!

Hazard Trees

Last night I listened to an ATC Webinar on identifying and mitigating hazard trees near trailheads, campsites, shelters and other places where numbers of people tend to congregate on the trail. Hazard trees are those likely to fall or drop limbs on hikers or campers. Not all dead trees are unsafe, and not all live trees are safe. Hazard trees are becoming more common in the cycle of natural succession, regrowth and maturing of our forests after the logging of earlier generations. This is compounded by the effects of insects (like HWA and pine beetles), disease and extreme weather patterns.

ATC is beginning an active program to encourage hikers and volunteers to be aware of potential hazard trees in order to avoid danger and to report them so they can be confirmed, identified with warning signs and dealt with by trained personnel. The BMT has fewer places where numbers of people congregate than the A.T., but some exist at popular campsites and scenic viewpoints. In coming weeks, BMTA will organize and communicate an appropriate program for the BMT. Meanwhile, I encourage you all to be alert for hazard trees while in the woods. You can learn to identify potential hazard trees by watching a good 30-minute Forest Service video available at <https://vimeo.com/93681877> which I recommend for BMTA sawyers and trail maintainers.

BMTA Volunteer Briefing

As reported previously, BMTA has signed a new Group Volunteer Agreement with the three National Forests through which the trail passes. Part of our responsibility is to ensure that we have safe procedures for our maintenance activity. We have scheduled a briefing on the new Agreement and these procedures, including Job Hazard Analyses (JHA), Emergency Action and Communications, and Worker's Comp and Tort protection. The Forest Service JHAs are now available on <http://bmta.org/Maintainers Page.htm>.

All BMTA trail workers should plan to attend this briefing which will feature an all-star list of presenters. It will be held at **9:30AM on Saturday, January 16, at the Craddock Center**, 186 Fred Craddock Dr, Cherry Log, GA 30522. The Craddock Center is the former church facility, just north of where the BMT crosses GA-515. (This is a change from the earlier planned location at the Whitewater Center which is being made primarily to facilitate wi-fi access.) **So we can have a count of attendees for planning, please let your primary Maintenance Director (Barry or Ken) know that you plan to attend.** Additional details will be posted on the website activities page and will be emailed to those who sign up.

Amazon Smile

If you are going to make purchases from Amazon during the holiday season or any other time, please use this address <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/58-1428009>. If you do so, Amazon will direct a small share of your purchases to BMTA. A convenient way to do this is to click on the link, and then bookmark that page on your toolbar or wherever you keep hiking links.

Welcome Friends to BMTA !

As a point of personal privilege, I'd like to welcome two friends to BMTA: **Michael Bartell** and I have volunteered together for years at the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. Michael was the 2014 Volunteer of the Year for the NPS Southeast Region, covering thirteen states and Puerto Rico. He now shares his boundless energy and dedication with BMTA. **Ted Spetnagel** is an active hiker and leader whom I have known for years in GATC. Ted has hiked all of the BMT in Georgia and in the Smokies, where he is a 900 Miler having hiked all the trails in the Park. He is also an ATC 2,000 Miler. He is now working on completing the BMT in Tennessee and North Carolina. He recently hiked the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail section with me, and I was pleased to see that he has become a Life Member of BMTA.

Anniversary Banquet WOW We Clean Up Pretty Good!



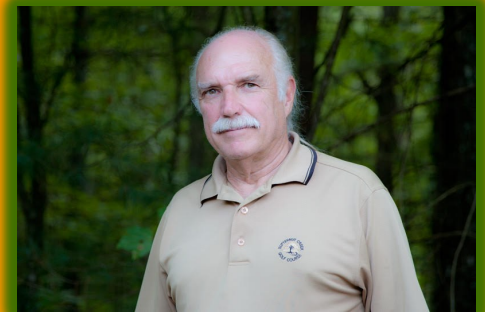
Maintainers with 30 Hours + Thank You!!



Publicity Co-Chairs Marcia and Marge



Ken Jones New TN/NC Maintenance Director



Larry Dumas New BMTA GA State Representative

Who Are These People? Never Before Seen Unless in Hiking Gear!



Peter Busscher New Conservation Board Member



BMTA 1980-2015: 35 Years of History and Memories

By Tom Keene

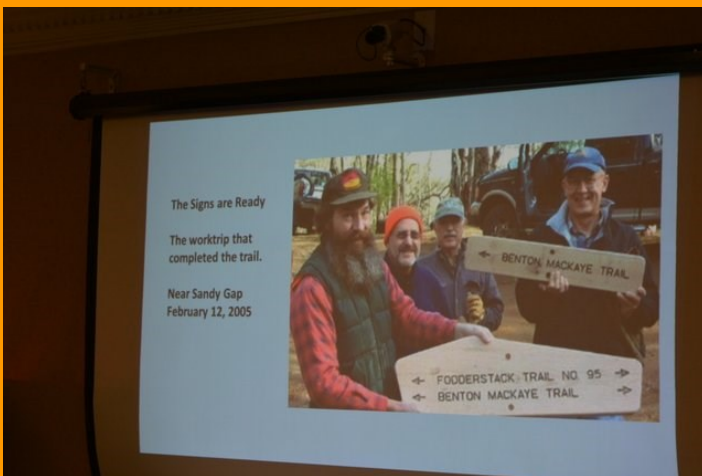
The central feature of the program at the annual meeting was a review of the history of the trail, using a PowerPoint presentation, interspersed with comments and recollections by founder Dave Sherman, and long-time members George Owen, Darcy Douglas, and David Blount.

The aim of the PowerPoint presentation was to give a sense of the major milestones in trail history as well as the larger historical context in which they occurred, with a special nod to “high points” (some dubious!) of popular culture during each of the decades of the trails existence.

There is no good way to reproduce the long-time member’s comments and recollections here, but you can take a look at the PowerPoint presentation which is now posted on the BMTA website:

<http://www.bmta.org/pdfs/BMTA-history-1980-2015.pdf>

Special thanks to Darcy Douglas, whose written history of BMTA appearing in Tim Homan’s *Hiking the Benton MacKaye Trail* (Peachtree Press, 2004) was the key source for the trail milestones slides in the presentation.



Dave Sherman and Ralph Heller Headline 35th Anniversary Awards Tireless Workers, Relentless Advocates

By Tom Keene

Amidst the many well-deserved awards of t-shirts and plaques at the 35th Anniversary meeting in Blue Ridge, it seems to me two awardees stood out, both major figures in the history of the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Dave Sherman

Dave Sherman is the original BMT visionary. During the 1970s, from his position in the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Dave saw the possibility of a trail on the western flank of the Blue Ridge to complement the Appalachian Trail on the east side. By that date recreational hiking had exploded in popularity and some felt the AT with its numerous shelters had become almost too popular, at least for those seeking a wilderness-like hiking experience. Sherman foresaw a trail complementary to the AT, more primitive and solitary, but still within easy driving distance of metro Atlanta. He produced a concept map for the trail, drawing on a map from Benton MacKaye's 1921 article that first proposed the AT. Sherman set about selling his idea to the GA-DNR, the U.S. Forest Service and, not least, the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC).

Sherman's relentless advocacy with the GATC was doubly successful: Not only did the GATC itself support the new, complementary trail, but nearly all the players in the building the BMT in Georgia were recruited from the GATC's membership. By the time Sherman left for Washington with the Carter Administration, a core of experienced trail activists, with close and continuing ties to the GATC, were in position to establish the Benton MacKaye Trail Association in 1980 and to begin building the trail.

It was a pleasure to see Dave out on the BMT again, and of course his remarks on Saturday evening were an inspiration to us all. We owe special thanks to George Owen whose repeated nudges encouraged Dave to join us for the annual meeting weekend and who served as Dave's host.



George Owen recognizing Dave



Dave in the spotlight!



Tom Keene presents Dave with Toccoa Bridge Shirt

Ralph Heller

It is difficult to exaggerate the positive influence Ralph has had on the BMTA in the last decade and a half. Ralph received two awards at the 35th Anniversary meeting. He was honored as a distinguished retiring Board of Directors member, having served on that body for a decade, including a two-year term as President, 2008-2010. In addition Ralph was honored as Trail Worker of the Year for 2015 and, as such, given custody of the “Golden Pulaski” which now bears a plaque with his name on it.



For more than a decade, Ralph has maintained his beautiful section of the trail (6d – Stanley Gap Trail to Weaver Creek Road). In recent years he has also done yeoman work keeping the hours-of-work records for Georgia and communicated them to the Forest Service as needed. His service on the BMTA Board is perhaps even more varied and valuable. In addition to two exemplary terms as President he has served as Georgia Maintenance Director and as Hike Director, in each case upgrading the efforts that had gone before, and then provided generous ongoing support for his successor. In recent years Ralph has also headed the Corridor

Protection Committee and thus spearheaded efforts to acquire easements necessary to eliminate the remaining miles of road-walks from the trail.

Then there is Ralph’s impact on membership. Always modest and unassuming, Ralph has nevertheless been a superb ambassador for the trail whether in his day to day encounters, or through fun hikes and participation at community festivals. His impact among the growing community of retirees living in the Blue Ridge area is especially notable. The increasing number of Fannin and Gilmer county residents on our membership rolls testifies to the success of these efforts. Of course, not the least of Ralph’s contributions was to recruit his wife Marge to serve as our Publicity Director and the BMTA-community networker-in-chief. Ralph and Marge are truly the BMTA power-couple in the Blue Ridge community! That Blue Ridge is now officially designated a Trail Town is due largely to their efforts.

Separated in Time; Similar in Impact

It is right and appropriate that an organization like the BMTA honor its founding figures, folks like Dave Sherman; but those who keep the organization going, who help it change with the times and get better at what it does, are also invaluable and richly deserve our gratitude. People like Ralph Heller. I fully expect that Ralph, being the guy he is, will be a little bit embarrassed to be compared to Dave Sherman. Yet there it is -- both have been tireless workers and relentless advocates for the trail, one at the beginning of our history, the other still having an impact in the present day. We are fortunate to have had both as our colleagues and friends.



ANNUAL MEETING HIKES

By George Owen, Annual Meeting Hikes Coordinator

Five hikes were held over the BMTA 35th anniversary weekend of November 6-8, all on the Benton MacKaye Trail. Four were in Georgia and one was just over the state line in Tennessee Sunday. Below are the reports by each hike leader. There was an opening hike for all Friday afternoon, a longer and shorter hike on Saturday, and the two Sunday treks were scheduled one each to the north and south of our central meeting community for convenience as to the homeward direction of the attendees as the weekend ended. Rain was predicted for much of the weekend through Saturday evening, sparing Sunday. However, rain did not really set in until Saturday afternoon. As hikes coordinator for the weekend, my big thanks go out to all the hike leaders listed below; all of them quite willingly volunteered their services!

Friday: Upper Springer Mountain Loop (AT, BMT)

By Darcy Douglas, Leader

Friday afternoon, November 6, the weekend kicked off with a hike from the Appalachian Trail (AT) parking lot on FS 42, climbing up the AT to the southern terminus of both trails on Springer Mountain, then coming down the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) to Big Stamp Gap and spent time atop Springer at the summit vista. Then we stopped for pictures on the BMT at the plaque honoring Benton MacKaye. We took a good rest at the southernmost rock view on the BMT, Owen Vista, then headed down to Big Stamp Gap.

In the interest of time we stopped the hike at Big Stamp Gap, since George Owen had shuttled his truck to this point. So we did not finish the remainder of the upper loop back to the AT parking lot. Some light rain had been expected in this area on Friday, but as the hike proceeded partial clearing came about and no rain occurred. David Blount maintains this first 1.7-mile section of BMT, and it looked wonderful!!! A special achievement. One of our hikers, **BMTA Founding Father David Sherman**, visiting us from Virginia, make his first trail hike on this trip since receiving a severe lower body fracture months before in a fall on winter ice. Congratulations, David! Participating were Jerry Bland, Sara Bland, Michael Bartell, David Blount, Ken Cissna, Darcy Douglas, Martha Fowler, Ralph Heller, Cheryl Kacher, George Owen, David Sherman, Kevin Wilson, Randy Wilson



Dave Sherman



A moment at the southern terminus of the BMT just below Springer Mountain's summit
(Photo by David Blount)

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Saturday: Stanley Gap to Fall Branch Falls

By Ralph Heller, Leader



This, the easier hike scheduled for Saturday, was indeed short but sweet. In spite of a forecast almost 100% probability of rain, 14 hikers participated in the event. The rain held off for this easy and mostly downhill trek. Fall Branch Falls put on a better than usual show as there was more water flowing due to recent rains.

The original plan was to check out the new, partially completed reroute up to the falls from the lower trailhead parking area, but it was starting to rain when the hikers reached Stanley Creek Road. Then it was decided to end the hike right there. This walk was a pleasant prelude to the BMTA Annual Meeting dinner, program, and other ceremonies that evening.

Hikers (not in order) reposing at the Falls: Steve Bayliss, Ken Cissna, David Ford, Sue Ford, Ralph Heller, Jack Kennedy, Dee Massengale, Jim Mathis, Clayton Pannell, Ruth Pannell, Kelly Simons, Clare Sullivan, Ed Sullivan, Mark Yost

(Photo by unknown visitor provided by Clare and Ed Sullivan)

Saturday: Revised Longer Hike - Wilsco Gap to "Lattes"

By George Owen, Leader

Apparently word got out that **(a) rain was forecast for the day, (b) this was to be a fairly long, difficult hike, and (c) worst of all, George Owen was leading it!** Somehow **Michael Bartell** either didn't get that word, or he was willing to overcome all these obstacles - **he was the ONLY person to show up for it!** Well, he was willing to do the entire planned hike, up and down in rain for miles, but he couldn't overcome the ultimate barrier to his finally hiking this section, radical anti-wet advocate **Wimp Owen**. Thus he agreed to the leader's urging to limit the hiking. So the two of us under heavily laden skies trekked part way from Wilsco Gap up Tipton Mountain, then back to our start - mainly to have a little initial exercise and to give Michael just a foretaste of this section. Next we agreed to go to another section he had not ever visited. We drove in my truck to Hudson Gap, and both of us hiked together almost halfway toward Bushy Head Gap. Here, mid-hike, light rain finally began. Michael then walked on out to Bushy Head Gap, completing the 2.6 miles, while I rapidly rushed back to Hudson Gap, my truck, and the drive around to Bushy Head - he beat me to that gap by about five minutes! By this time the noon hour was ending, and yes, rain was definitely settling in. Leader **Wimp Owen** made what he considered his best suggestion of the day: Go back to Blue Ridge to the L & L Beanery for lattes. Well, Blue Ridge was packed with tourists, and we had to drive around awhile to find parking, but soon Michael and I were each enjoying a good size latte apiece (caramel and pumpkin spice) topped off with a fresh-made strawberry pastry each. **What other annual meeting hike offered you warmth, dryness, good conversation, and a latte at the end?!!!**

Continued next page

Sunday: FS Rd. 221 to Thunder Rock Campground (TN)

By Clare and Ed Sullivan, Leaders

This morning after the big event, the Annual Meeting, four BMTA members and guest Paul McCord enjoyed a 3.4-mile, mostly downhill hike on the Tennessee portion of the BMT from FS 221 down to the lovely Thunder Rock Campground along the Ocoee River. The five hikers met at the parking lot behind Ocoee #3 Powerhouse and then rode to the beginning of Section 11e.

There were nice views at the top (1,900') that could be enjoyed when the leaves have fallen. We walked down the roadbed and followed the trail left through the old growth hemlock forest. Sadly, many of the hemlocks are dead and dying. Clare showed where she had seen bears scattering down trees on her recent hike. A stop was made at the big pile of brick and blocks topped with a cross. Each hiker had their ideas as to the purpose of the vine-covered site. Is it a tomb? Is it a ceremonial site?*

We soon crossed FS Rd. 45 where the trail narrows to a footpath. The monster blowdown that greeted BMTA hikers in July had been cleared from the trail. There were great views under the power lines. Finally the trail descended via switchbacks and steps down to the beautiful Ocoee River and through the campground to our parking area.



A group of three generation backpackers took our group photo. They had spent the night on the BMT by Rough Creek. We chatted with them about the BMTA and answered their questions about their future backpack trip being planned on the BMT. Our Membership Chairman Ken Cissna gave them BMTA literature from his pack. Finally, we were all thrilled to be hiking for once on a clear day. IT'S OVER AND WAS MOSTLY DOWNHILL!

HIKE PARTICIPANTS: Hank Baudet, Ken Cissna, Paul McCord, Clare Sullivan, Ed Sullivan

* Answer to mystery noted in paragraph 2: This pile of bricks and blocks was brought in over several years by a religious club at Lee College in Cleveland, TN, where the group then held a ceremony. Each year over several years additional blocks and bricks were added by the group annually. Such action on National Forest Land is in clear violation of federal law. Several years ago I requested the Forest Service in TN to have Lee College see that this was removed; that was never done. - Geo. Owen

Continued next page

Sunday: BMTA Headquarters and Sisson Property (GA)

By Tom Keene, Leader

The Sunday morning Georgia hike was a bit like a meal in “four courses”.

“First course” was breakfast at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge, the site of many pre-worktrip breakfasts. We had a lovely group, headlined by founder Dave Sherman, his weekend host (also a founding member) George Owen, and our trail Tennessee pioneer Clayton Pannell and his wife Ruth. Other notables included a group who need no last names, Darcy, Claire, Mona, and Marty. Also on hand were Michael Martel and Tom Keene. All of us were delighted when past president Ted Reissing and wife Kay appeared, fresh back from a trip to Peru.

From the delights of breakfast we moved on to the “second course,” a quick tour of the BMTA “World Headquarters” (aka WHQ!) located in a restored century-old log cabin near the Sisson Company's offices on highways 515/76. The two-room cabin really is a treat to see in itself, and, thanks to Joe Sisson's generosity, it serves beautifully as both our tool shed and storage place for archives, signs, and such.

From the Sisson Company parking lot we carpooled a couple miles to the Sisson Cherry Log property and the trailhead just across the covered bridge at the railroad that the BMT crosses for “course three”, the hike itself. Two more hikers, Dee Massengale and Vicki Wagoner, were awaiting us at the bridge. The hike took us trail-north from the covered bridge, up the BMT running next to the Sisson cascade (in excellent form with all the recent rain!), on to Cherry Lake and a visit to the little chapel, then continuing to the BMT shelter and Indian Rock Lake. The out and back hike of 2.6 miles round-trip was filled with beautiful scenes, much conversation, and several prime photo opportunities.



THE GANG'S ALL HERE - The Sunday Georgia hike group poses early in their morning BMT trek on the first of several bridges crossed during the walk. This one is below the tumbling cascade just south of the railroad. (Photo by Tom Keene)



AHHH! JUST TO SIT! Part of the Georgia Sunday hikers enjoy the only BMT shelter south of the Smokies, located on the Sisson property. Situated in a lovely little cove by a stream, the facility was built by the BMTA members years ago from materials donated by Joe Sisson. (Photo by Tom Keene)

For the last stage of our “four-course meal” we actually had a meal: most of our group went on to the Pink Pig for lunch, there to meet the Reissings again returning from a quick trip to Carter Lake, and to enjoy another and final reunion of the grand BMTA 35th anniversary weekend. Here we concluded the weekend early afternoon Sunday at the BMTA's historic eatery with lots more trail talk in warm companionship.

The hike, in all it's “four courses” together, was a treat for all involved!

AT&T Comes Out to Help

By Philip Guhl

Friday the 13th is considered bad luck to many, but to the Benton MacKaye Trail Association it was a great day!

AT&T encourages its employees to spend one day every calendar year to volunteer for a charitable organization. This opportunity is taken advantage of by many in the company. A select few chose to come out to the BMT to put in some serious effort to make the trail safer and preserve it, so we will *leave a footpath for generations to follow*.

On Friday, November 13th, Fredrik Andersson, Greg Hartsfield, John Schickinger, Rick Wheeler, and Eric Lodge met up with Phil and Debra Guhl at The Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. After a quick breakfast the crew set out for Section 2d to perform maintenance and learn more about the whole process. After the safety talk at the bridge with Pulaskis, McCleods, and Fire Rakes in hand, the team ventured northward with Georgia Director of Maintenance, Barry Allen, at the helm. As the 3.6 miles were hiked to Highway 60, the team side hilled, de-bermed, installed and cleaned water diversions, installed nicks, and removed a few blowdowns along the way.

At the end of the day, everyone appeared in good spirits and expressed an interest in joining a monthly work trip. Next year, we hope to get a larger group involved!



Left to right (standing): Greg Hartsfield, Fredrik Andersson, Eric Lodge, John Schickinger, Rick Wheeler
Left to right (kneeling): Barry Allen, Phil Guhl

Behind the camera: Debra Guhl



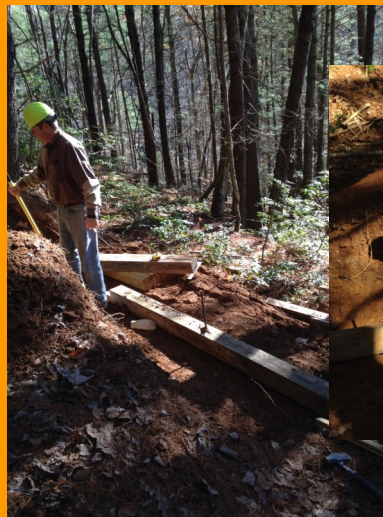
Georgia Work Trip Report, November 2015

By Barry Allen

After a month or so off from trail work, I was honestly ready to get back to it. I absolutely love being on the trail, whether it is hiking or ‘working’. But it is really not work; it is an opportunity to be around some exceptional people for the day. Saturday, November 14, started off as a really cool morning, about 39 degrees when we started, but clear with no prospect of rain in the forecast. I had hopes for a crew of five or six people for the day. After all, I was competing with the Georgia/Auburn football, and a Forest Service training class which claimed a number of our regulars. But lo and behold, **THIRTEEN volunteers** showed up to help at Fall Branch Falls! My plan for the day had been a simple task of cribbing the first switchback – made up of deep fill on a very old logging cut. But we managed to get the cribbing completed on the switchback, PLUS a thirty foot section of trail dug to tie in ‘old’ new trail to ‘new’ new trail, PLUS several sections completed that had been skipped over due to difficulty, PLUS safe areas cut to help the next group begin additional cribbing. All in all, a heck of a day!

Bob Sloan, David Blount, Charlie Fehnel, Frank Forehand and Don Kenny began the day excavating for and installing 6x6 pressure treated cribbing with Darcy Douglas and Jeff DePaola making gravel for backfill at the base of the cribbing. (Making gravel is a euphemism for breaking big rock into small rock with sledgehammer and mallet) So we sort of had our own chain gang working the rock pile.

Meanwhile, Tom Keene and George Owen took several others forward to begin the hard task of digging trail in various locations. My low key, very informal work day turned into a productive day at Fall Branch Falls. A lot of work was done and several loose ends were tied up. But we still have a number of items to complete – including about another 50 yards of trail to dig before reaching the Falls.



Next month, I need help of all kinds. We have some additional cribbing to complete and more gravel to make. I have a bench to haul in and assemble to make the hike a little friendlier once the route is opened (many families of all ages make this trek to the Falls, and some will need a rest stop or two along the way), and I need some rhododendron transplanted onto the slope below the first switchback to stabilize the soil and soften the look of the 6x6 cribbing. So join me if you are able, the second Saturday in December. And thanks to all of the aforementioned -- plus Ralph Heller, Brian Trinkle, and Doug Kleiber for their efforts on the day. Look forward to seeing you all next month. I hear the weather in beautiful in Blue Ridge in December!

BMTA DECEMBER WORK TRIP

Last Chance for Fun and Frivolity in the Woods for 2015!!

Please join us **Saturday, Saturday December 12** as we continue our reroute at **Fall Branch Falls**

- ◆ **Where:** Fall Branch Falls, Stanly Creek Road parking area
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, December 12, 2015, 9:00 AM
- ◆ **Meet:** Big Mommas (across from the Pink Pig), Cherry Log – 8:15 AM for breakfast or 8:45 AM for ride Fall Branch Falls. Or meet us at 9:00 at Fall Branch Falls
- ◆ **Plan for the Day: Something for everyone:** We have cribbing to complete and gravel to make. We have rhododendrons and ground cover to plant on the slope at the first switchback. We have the first of at least two benches to haul in and assemble on a selected site. And we have approximately 60 yards of trail left to dig before hitting the existing trail at Fall Branch. Please join us for the **LAST TRIP OF THE YEAR!** We won't get nearly everything complete, but we'll have a good time and share some Christmas Cheer.
- ◆ **What to bring:** minimum 2 liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at bmtabarry AT gmail.com or 770-294-7384

DON'T MISS THE FUN!!!

Shop the BMTA store for
Christmas

T-shirts, hats, maps, Trail Guides
Gift memberships to the BMTA
What better way to celebrate the season!!

http://bmta.org/BMTA_Store.htm

BMT Towee Creek Reroute Construction Begins in Tennessee

By Ken Jones

Tread construction work is beginning on Nov. 23 for the BMTA in Tennessee in the Ocoee Ranger District. Over the past two summers, the Southeast Conservation Corps, based out of Chattanooga, has constructed four switchbacks and two retaining walls along with connecting tread. They have done an excellent job of building log reinforced switchbacks that will last for decades with minimal maintenance. The remaining tread construction is about 3/4 mile in length. The Forest Service wants to make completion of this reroute a priority for both the Tellico and Ocoee Ranger Districts. In order to complete this project expeditiously, Forest Service personnel from both districts will join our BMTA maintainers in working Mondays and Thursdays until project completion. For the last eight years the BMT in Tennessee has had a cooperative relationship with the Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen (SABCH). They will be joining us in completing this reroute so that the trail construction can be finished, and they can move on to other horse trail priorities. The BMTA owes a special vote of thanks to these horse riders who are willing to work on building a trail on which they can never ride. Thank You!

Great Winter SEFTC Smokies Event Jan 28-31

By Darcy Douglas

Hey folks, for those of you who in past years attended the Wilderness Wildlife Week (WWW) annually in Pigeon Forge, TN with great winter hikes and fellowship, this is your chance to continue that tradition even though WWW has been moved to May. The Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC) will be doing a similar event with hikes and a Saturday meeting on January 28-31, centered at the Music Road Inn in Pigeon Forge. Hikes will be Thursday, Friday, and Sunday -- several each day for various levels of ability. Saturday will be reserved for the SEFTC's program. The featured speaker will be Betty M. Jewett, Supervisor of the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia. There will be displays, information about SEFTC, sharing by various organizations, and an evening social event/dinner. SEFTC will forgo small group workshops in this year's event. Unlike WWW, buses will not be available for the hikes, and attendees will be requested to help provide transportation with their vehicles in car pools to and from the hiking trailheads.

As with the old WWW, room rates for this event are off-season exceptionally low, starting at \$59 for Wednesday, Thursday, and increasing to \$79 for Friday, Saturday. Mountain-view rooms are \$10 higher each night. Sales tax of 9.75% and lodging tax of 2.5% are also applicable. Deadline for rooms is December 28, 2015. There is a registration fee of \$20 to cover the SEFTC expense at providing this event. In addition, each diner must pay for her/his own meals. You must be registered to attend all events, including hikes.

Two from BMTA are giving key leadership for this event: SEFTC President Darcy Douglas is overall planning and coordinating this event, and George Owen is in charge of the hike. Learn more and register now (including payment by PayPal) by going to the website:

Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition

Click in the upper right corner on "SEFTC Biennial Conference, January 28-31, 2016." You may also contact President AT seftc.com for answers to any questions.

The SEFTC Board has more members from the BMTA than any other of the over thirty member organizations. We hope to see a great host of BMTAers at this January event!

BMT Dry Pond Lead to Rock Creek Trail

By Claire Sullivan with Photos Courtesy Walter Polk

On an absolutely beautiful day for hiking, four BMT members (Ken Cissna, Walt Polk, Mike Pivensky and Hank Baudet) were led by Clare and Ed Sullivan up Dry Pond Lead to the Rock Creek Trail and back to Hwy 64, 8.2 miles. Along the adventure they encountered a long snake stretched across the trail sunning, a humongous mushroom, beautiful fall leaves, several small waterfalls, a beautiful creek, interesting shaped trees and lots of laughs!

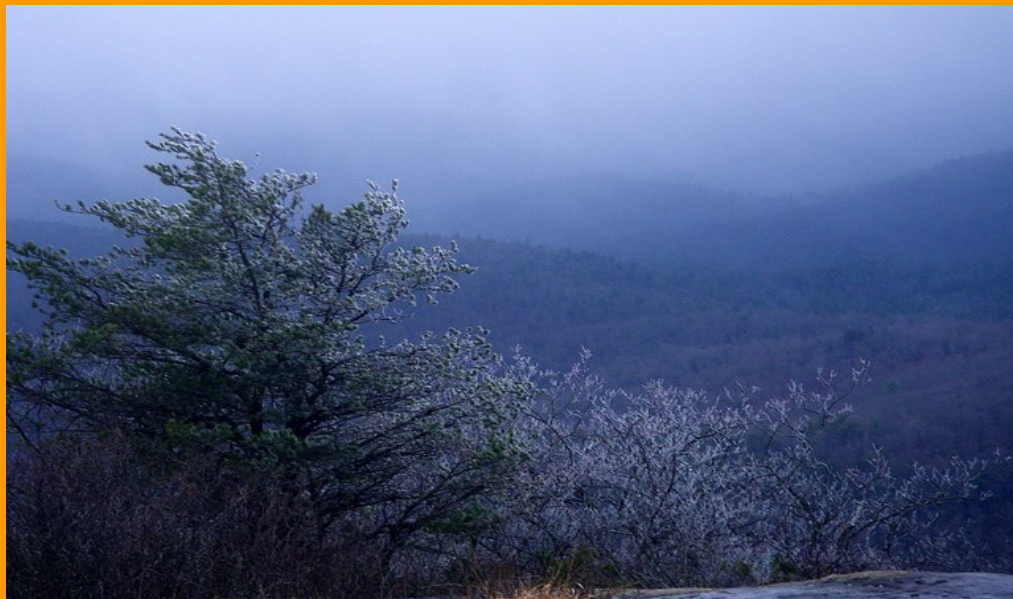


At one point there was a hunk of white fur on a tree. One hiker explained that due to global warming the polar bears have migrated to the Cherokee Forest!! A huge tree served as a lovely couch as a welcomed rest stop. Our new plant for the day was Native Ginger. A terrific day was had by all!

Besides shivering, note that change of mental status and muscular coordination is the next thing to look for; this person may exhibit poor judgment, unsteady gait, slurred speech, and apathy. This is a person you may have to take charge and convince they are in trouble!

- ◆ **TREATMENT:** Remembering that out in the woods on the AT we are in 'field' conditions, I am going to focus only on MILD hypothermia, because anything beyond that requires urgent evacuation to a medical facility.
- ⇒ **Prevent further heat loss:** get victim out of water and wind, replace wet clothes with dry clothes, and insulate with a sleeping bag and tent if available, otherwise improvise with a tarp, plastic garbage bag, pine straw, leaves, anything that will make a cocoon about the victim. **This needs to be top and bottom:** laying a victim on cold ground allows continued heat loss; an insulated pad if available is ideal. A pullover hat should be placed on the head, as head and neck are a great source of heat loss.
- ⇒ **Facilitate rewarming, of which shivering is the best mechanism.** Warm food or warm sugar containing drinks will provide energy needed to maintain shivering. **A hot drink is not helpful**---pour a cup of hot coffee in a 10 gal. container of water and see how much the temperature rises! As mentioned earlier, external heat may actually turn off the shivering mechanism. However, inhalation of steam from boiling water may help, as may a fire to create a warmer environment. If a victim is Moderate or Severe, do all of the above, but get help fast!
- ◆ **PREVENTION:** This should be pretty obvious. **Be aware of weather conditions when you hike, and remember they can change.** Wear clothing appropriate for your activity, but in the back of your mind you might always think of having to spend an unexpected night out! You can put some dry clothes, a "watch" hat, a large industrial size trash bag, a pack of matches, and a votive candle in a pretty small bundle, and throw it in your day pack as an emergency hypothermia kit. If you don't need it, maybe someone else will. The way to use it is to get into dry clothes, put the hat on your head, make a hole in the end of the bag big enough for your face; squat so that the bag completely covers you, to the ground. Place the candle between your feet and light it....carefully...and relax and wait to warm up. This is particularly useful if you are cold, and alert, and not yet shivering.

Because **the onset of hypothermia can be subtle, be aware of how you feel, and be aware of others in the group:** shivering, altered mental status, and altered muscular coordination are the things to look for. Finally, if you suspect this problem in yourself or someone else, bring it to the attention of others in the group, because the time to begin treatment is when you suspect the diagnosis. Good luck, and stay warm this winter!



Thoughts From the Trail

By Mike Pilvinski Hiking Director

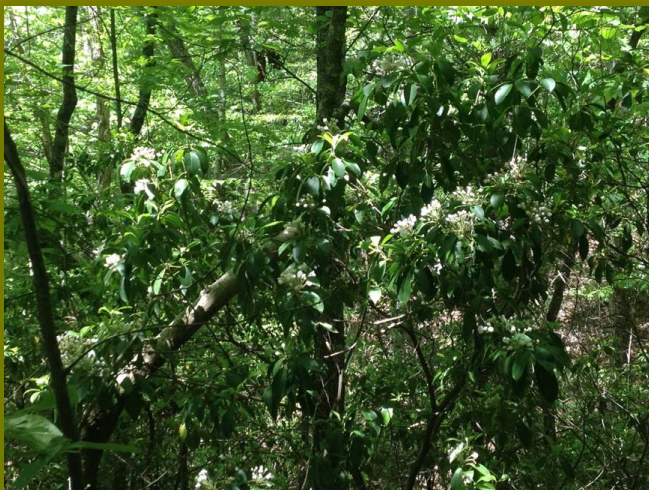


One Saturday a couple of months ago, I hiked to the “Hike Inn,” and back with my son and a group of his business associates in the Atlanta film and entertainment industry. Most of them were thrilled to get out of the urban area and into the woods. They not only loved their hiking experience but enjoyed the fellowship along the trail, meeting new friends, learning a bit about nature, and visiting the Hike Inn. However, on the way back, one young man commented that he was disappointed that he hadn't seen a deer, bear, or even a squirrel.

I kept quiet since these were my son's friends and I was “the old man.” However, I couldn't help but ask myself, “How could you possibly expect to see wildlife when you were either talking, laughing loudly, texting, or surfing the web for the entire 10 miles?” Each of us comes into the woods for different reasons. I guess the important thing is that you are in the woods!

The 2015 BMTA hiking season showed us how popular our hikes have become. Our Easy Trek hikes continue to draw larger and larger numbers of folks to the point where we have to actually conduct multiple hikes, led by different leaders simultaneously. Sometimes we have to limit the number of hikers because of National Forest Service restrictions within Designated Wilderness Areas.

Its like the old adage, “Be careful what you wish for!” Too many hikers complicate planning and often create a noisy line tramping thru the woods instead of the serene experience many of us seek. Therefore, consideration is being given to limiting the number of hikers, even in non-wilderness areas, or requiring BMTA membership after a certain number of hikes as a “Guest.” I'd like to hear your thoughts on this. Contact me: mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com



Upcoming Hikes

By Mike Pilvinski Hiking Director

Friday, December 4th.

- ◆ **Blood Mountain** is the highest peak on the Georgia Section of the Appalachian Trail and the 6th highest mountain in Georgia. It is also said to be the most hiked section of the AT in Georgia. The trail begins at the Byron Reece Parking lot. After 9/10 mile it intersects with the Appalachian trail leading south to the peak. The hike is a **4.8 mile round trip with 1800 feet of elevation gain. Because of the elevation gain it is considered moderately strenuous.** On the peak is a two-room stone cabin built by the CCC in 1934, and recently refurbished by the GATC. This building is on the national register of historic places and now used as a hiker shelter. This hike boasts some of the best views on the GA AT. Contact hike leader: mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com

*** Note some of 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 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.

Parking Solution For Highway 515/US76 Crossing Location

Hikers on the section of the BMT that crosses Highway 515/US 76 between Ellijay and Blue Ridge, no longer have to park next to the highway or along County Road 158 on the east side of the highway. Julie Jabaley, Executive Director of the Craddock Center, has given permission for hikers to use the parking lot next to the Center, which is located on the hill just west of the highway. Look for the Craddock Center sign and take the road up the hill. The trail passes just behind the Center. Backpackers may also park their cars overnight. The facility is open weekdays for hikers to use the restrooms or to get a fresh supply of water.

EXCLUSIVE HIKE INN OFFER FOR BMTA MEMBERS!! BOOK NOW!

The Len Foote Hike Inn has been reserved exclusively for BMTA members at one half the normal room rate on Wednesday, February 24, 2016. Only twenty rooms are available so make your reservations early. Just call **1-800-501-8032**. Your rate of \$85.00 + tax includes a room for two, dinner and breakfast. This annual BMTA trip is always one of the most enjoyable events of the season. The moon will just be two days from full so we may have one of those special evening views as well as the famous Hike Inn sunrise. For more information go to hike-inn.com

The Newsletter is published on the last Saturday of the month.

Due to Christmas the **deadline for December is Sunday December 20**

Thank you !