



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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OCTOBER 2015

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BMTA President's Column October 2015

BMT Trail Condition Is Good

Late summer is always a challenge keeping the trail clear of growth. I recently received a report from Rick Harris saying that the final overgrown section of the "Heart of Darkness" on the TN/NC border was recently brushed and cleared of blowdowns. In September I led a hike on the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail in NC and found it had been well cleared in the weeks between my scouting hike and the actual hike. Reports from Georgia are that it has been kept in good shape, as usual. BMTA has a great corps of maintainers in Georgia under the leadership of Barry Allen. Reports from hikers in the Smokies have been good too. In remote areas of TN/NC we are challenged to keep the trail cleared, in spite of Herculean efforts by our dedicated group local maintainers. Whenever possible please lend them a hand.

Relocation Projects

Work continues on our two ongoing trail relocation projects. At Towee Creek on the John Muir Trail section of the BMT in Tennessee the final cribbed switchbacks were completed by the Forest Service Ocoee Ranger District team and the Southeast Conservation Corps youth crew. It will be largely up to BMTA to connect the trail from switchbacks to the existing BMT on the ridge top. At Falls Branch Falls we are on the final push to connect to the existing BMT near the falls and close the old, eroded fall-line trail.

We will soon be meeting with our Forest Service partners to define needs, priorities, plans and resources for next year. If you have ideas and suggestions to express, please give them to the BMTA Maintenance Directors for 2016.

BMTA Volunteers in the Forests (VIF) Briefing

On January 16, we are planning a briefing for BMTA trail maintainers during which we will explain the procedures that we have developed to implement the new VIF Agreement with its Worker's Comp and Tort protections. We plan to review the Job Hazard Analyses (JHAs) provided by the Forest Service, as well as the BMTA developed supplements for Check-in/Check-out, Emergency Action and Emergency Communications. **Maintainers please save January 16 on your calendars.**



BMTA Headquarters

Continued next page

BMTA Officers 2014-2015

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

CONF Trail Maintenance Courses

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest has a grant for a couple of classes on trail maintenance and design to further educate some of the volunteer base working on our trails. Please see the course descriptions below:

Basic 101 Trail Maintenance Course

Course Direction: Designed for those new to trail maintenance or those wishing to revisit basic principles of trail maintenance and mitigating visitor use impacts.

Goal: Volunteers should leave this training with the skills needed to be productive and effective during a trail workday and start a foundation to be a future crew leader.

Advanced 201 Trail Training Course

Course Direction: Designed for those wishing to advance their knowledge, skills and ability to develop a sustainable trail system.

Goal: Volunteers being able to identify a problem, develop a solution and construct a sustainable trail that meets FS standards and the needs of the users.

We do not yet have dates for the courses, but would like to make sure we (BMTA) have good attendance at both courses. Even those people who have volunteered for years will find these programs to be helpful refreshers. **If you have not already done so, please let Barry Allen know if you are interested in attending either of these courses.**

BMTA Hikes Well Attended

The BMTA hikes have been so successful that we are at the point of having more attendees at some hikes than can be accommodated by the hike leaders. Part of the solution will be for us to offer more hikes, but the Board is thinking about policies to determine priorities when demand exceeds capacity for a hike. We want to continue to welcome hikers who are new to BMTA, since they are the lifeblood of our future membership and trail workers, but we may decide to put a limit on the number of hikes that can be attended without joining BMTA. If you have thoughts on this subject, please share them with a BMTA Board member.

Annual Meeting

I look forward to seeing many of you during the BMTA 35th Annual Meeting weekend, November 6-8, in Blue Ridge. Our Annual Meeting Committee of Tom Keene, Darcy Douglas and George Owen have been working hard to organize a fun weekend and an interesting meeting. Attending will be several of the legends from the early days of BMTA. It should be fascinating to hear some of their reminiscences.

Bob



BMTA Annual Meeting Weekend Schedule of Hikes and Other Activities Nov. 6-8, 2015

Friday November 6

Springer Mountain AT, BMT Loop – Moderate. This moderate afternoon trek features a visit to the Springer Mountain summit, the beginning of two premier hiking trails, two beautiful overlooks, and a visit to the Benton MacKaye plaque. Length 5.2 mi. Leader: Darcy Douglas, bmtadarcy AT yahoo DOT com.

Meeting places:

Blue Ridge: 11:30PM. In the parking lot in front of the Community Room of the Community and Southern Bank, located at 150 Orvin Lance Dr. near the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce building. Coordinating: George Owen, 706-374-4716

Ellijay (for those coming from metro Atlanta): **11:30PM** Meet in the Ellijay Walmart parking lot, the area nearest the highway. Leading: Darcy Douglas, see above for contact info.

Saturday November 7

Shorter Hike-Stanley Gap to the Falls: An **easy** 2-mile hike -- This hike starts at the trail head of the Stanley Gap Trail from the parking lot at Stanley Gap. It winds its way for about .6 miles to the intersection with the BMT near a ridge top. From there it is downhill to Fall Branch Falls. After viewing the falls, the hikers will get to travel down to the parking area on the new and challenging Fall Branch reroute which is still a work in progress. Ralph Heller Hike Leader, phone 770-235-9760.

Meeting Places:

Blue Ridge: 10:30AM . In the parking lot in front of the Community Room of the Community and Southern Bank, located at 150 Orvin Lance Dr. near the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce building. Coordinating: George Owen, gowen2 AT tds DOT net

Stanley Gap Trailhead: 11:00 AM – off Stanley Gap Road

Longer Hike-BMT, Wilscot Gap to Shallowford Bridge - Moderately Strenuous - This 7.6-mile hike has several ups and downs including section high point of 3,147 Tipton Mountain and the fire tower atop Brawley Mountain. Hike Leader: George Owen, 706-374-4716

Meeting places (shuttle involved):

Optional Breakfast: 8:30 Meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge on the Old Hwy. 76 near the Pizza Hut

Blue Ridge: 9:15 In the parking lot in front of the Community Room of the Community and Southern Bank, located at 150 Orvin Lance Dr. near the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce building.

Wilscot Gap: 10:15 Hike departs

Saturday November 6 continued

BMTA Annual Meeting 5:00 – 8:30PM at the Community Room of the Community and Southern Bank, located at 150 Orvin Lance Dr. near the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce building.

Sunday November 8

Get Away Breakfast: 8:30AM – Meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge on the Old Hwy. 76 near the Pizza Hut

GA Hike –Sisson Property: Covered Bridge to the BMT shelter – Moderate This 3 mile hike will begin just across the covered Bridge in the Sisson property, climb past a beautiful cascade, head to the shelter, and return by the same route. Leaders, Tom and Jane Keene. [tkbmta AT gmail DOT com](mailto:tkbmta@gmail.com).

Meeting Places:

BlueRidge – 9:35AM In the parking lot in front of the Community Room of the Community and Southern Bank, located at 150 Orvin Lance Dr. near the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce building.

CherryLog – 9:50AM Lower parking lot of the Sisson Company offices at 344 Appalachian Highway, about 5 miles south along 515/76, also site of the BMTA World Headquarters Cabin.

TN/NC Hike – FS Road 211 to Thunder Rock Campground – Easy to Moderate. This 3.4 mile hike will descend from the BMT crossing of FS 211 to the campground at the Ocoee River. Leader Barry Allen, [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384

Meeting Places:

BlueRidge – 9:35AM. In the parking lot in front of the Community Room of the Community and Southern Bank, located at 150 Orvin Lance Dr. near the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce building.

Powerhouse #3 – 10:30AM. Off US 64 just west of the Ocoee Whitewater Center. Parking area immediately behind the Powerhouse.



In Memory of Member Donna Wyatt

By Marge Heller

BMTA Member and our dear neighbor Donna Wyatt was involved in a tragic auto accident in Jasper, GA and passed away, from her injuries, October 23, 2015.

Just 3 days prior, I was at their home talking to Donna and her husband Almond Mote about their 560 mile hike on the Camino de Santiago from St. Jean de Port in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, with a coastal side trip to Muxia. They completed their pilgrimage on October 6th. The trip was in celebration of Donna's recent retirement and birthday.



Because of her passion for education, Donna continued to teach on-line classes for the University of Phoenix

Donna and Almond were on the October 17th BMTA Hike led by Ken Cissna. It was on this hike that Donna told Ken, upon meeting him for the first time, that she had referenced his books in her Dissertation.

I will remember this wonderful lady as an inspiration on how to live life to the fullest and make each day count.

Donna is survived, in addition to her loving husband Almond, by 4 children, 5 step-children and 8 grandchildren.



Section 1 of the BMT Springer Mt. to Three Forks

Story by Ken Cissna with Photos by Walt Polk

On October 17th, 11 BMTA members set out from Ellijay headed for Three Forks. We left several cars there, and continued to the parking lot on Springer Mountain. From there, we hiked south on the Appalachian Trail to the Springer Mt. summit and the start of the AT where we saw the AT plaque as well as enjoyed the lovely view. We then took in the Springer Mt. shelter on our way to the start of the BMT a couple of tenths below the summit. We stopped at the plaque honoring Benton MacKaye at mile 0.1 of the BMT.



Hike Photographer Walter Polk with BMT Plaque



George Owen Overlook

The eleven of us—Michael Bartell, Toni Bunch, Frank Forehand, Almond Mote, Walt Polk, Dave Schroeder, Clare and Ed Sullivan, Clayton Webster, Donna Wyatt, and hike leader Ken Cissna—were surprised to find nearly twenty hikers already at the George Owen Overlook at mile 1.3 when we stopped for lunch. It was a beautiful day, and hikers were taking full advantage of both the BMT and the AT. We continued along the BMT, crossing the AT twice, before ending our 7.1 mile hike back at the beautiful creekside at Three Forks.



Colors were stunning



Bridge at Three Forks

How to Rehab a Saw

By Rick Harris

I spent the day today with Jim Holland at his place just east of Big Frog while he helped me rehab an old and very rusty 6 foot bucking saw. I was about to just paint some scene of a cabin in the woods on it, but I got with Jim to see if I could save the saw. We cleaned it in an electrolysis tank (actually Jim did this before I arrived), then Jim showed me how to further clean off the rust with stainless steel scrubbers, WD40, sandpaper, then using an angle-grinder, followed by a dremel tool. We also rehabed the hardware for the handles, and he gave me directions on how to make new wooden handles from drapery dowels, which I will do. Now my next move is to sharpen the saw, a lengthy process which I will carry out as time permits over the next week or two. But I know how to do this, having attended the Dolly saw sharpening class at the Wilderness Skills Institute a couple of years ago. I have already sharpened several saws over the past two years.



Jim asked if there would be any interest in turning what he did today with me into a class which we could offer to the BMTA, SABCH, and/or SAWS group. It would probably take most all of one day and attendance may be limited since too many people might complicate the teaching. Please give Jim and me your thoughts on this. My email address is [HarrisRi AT aol.com](mailto:HarrisRi@AOL.com) and Jim's is [lanconn AT tds.net](mailto:lanconn@tds.net)

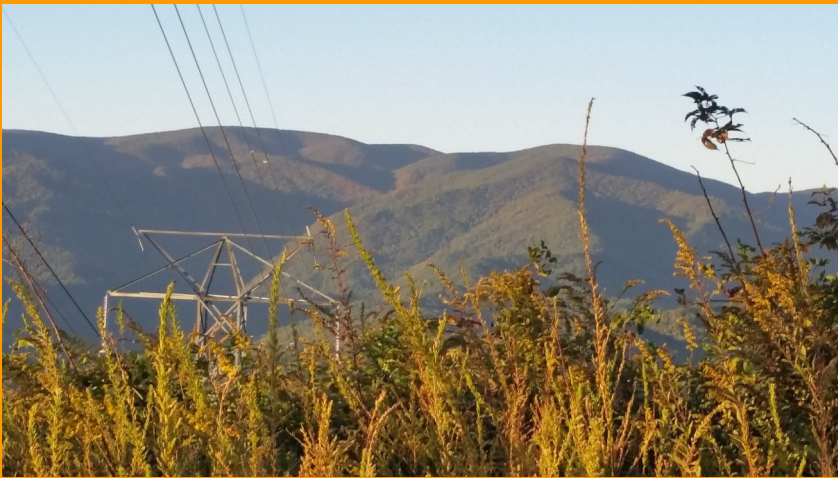
BMTA/Cherokee Hiking Club Backpack Trip

BMT Yellow Creek Mtn Section

October 17-18, 2015

by Rick Harris

Five backpackers (Rick Harris, Stuart Johnson, Mike Pilvinsky, Bob Sloan, and David Mintz) met at the Fontana Dam Visitor Center parking lot at 9 AM on Saturday, then carpooled to Tapoco Lodge. On the way we spotted a water cache where the BMT crosses Oldfield Gap Road. We parked our shuttle vehicles by the tennis courts at Tapoco Lodge. We then headed up the BMT from Meadow Branch Road and were soon saying unkind words about the designer of this section of the old AT, none other than Myron Avery. The first mile or so is very, very steep. After several rest stops, we finally got to the fairly flat stretch before the final climb up to Oldfield Gap Road. Here we added several liters of water to our packs, since we doubted we would see any more flowing water till we reached Fontana Village. This was indeed the case. We ate lunch as well, then headed up the gated forest service road, veering off the road and back onto the trail a ways up the road. This section of the BMT is hilly. That is a euphemism. It goes straight up and down every knob of Yellow Creek Mountain. We finally reached the powerlines around 3 PM, a distance of about 6 miles from our vehicles at Tapoco Lodge. The difference in elevation between Tapoco and the powerlines is about 1800 feet, but with all the ups and downs, we probably did twice this in ups. We set up our shelters, then we all rested in the beautiful sun with great views.



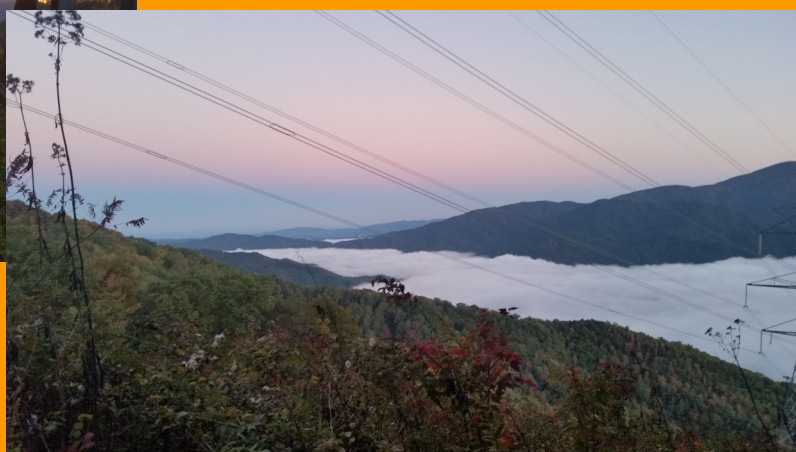
It was actually warm until the sun went down. We ate our meager rations, considering our prior calorie expenditure. We sat around and watched the sun go down over the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock and Citico Wilderness Areas and watched shadows form on the Smokies looking toward Gregory Bald. The sky was crystal clear and the sunset was quite a sight.



Continued next page



As soon as the sun set, we headed to our tents, hammocks, and bivy sacks and warm sleeping bags. It got quite cold overnight, below freezing, but we all survived well without anyone becoming a human ice cube.



Sunday morning we all rose at sunrise, ate our breakfast, broke camp, and headed north on the BMT. We climbed again quite a bit to the top of Yellow Creek Mountain, going by the Asheville TV station reflector. We understand this reflector was erected to reflect the TV waves down into Robbinsville, so those residents could enjoy local TV. We understand it is no longer in use, with the advent of cable and dish TV. From the top of Yellow Creek Mountain, it was pretty much all downhill (a lot of it) to Fontana Village. We stopped in at the lodge and ate our lunch out on the veranda. We then hoofed it the rest of the way to the dam over fairly level trail, arriving there about 2:30 PM. Our Sunday distance was about 9 miles, but much easier than the 6 of the day before.

We then headed back to Tapoco Lodge, picking up our water cache on the way, retrieved our cars and ate a late lunch/early supper at the lodge consisting of pizza, hamburgers, sandwiches, and beer. Two of us ordered a whole pizza each, intending to take leftovers home to our wives. That did not happen. Nothing went home except full stomachs.

This section is in excellent shape, thanks to the hard work of Dick Evans and his Robbinsville crew. The trail was easy to follow. It is a beautiful section of trail, but is clearly difficult. This is not a leisurely walk in the woods. Only the tough will survive. Perhaps in the future we can reverse some of Myron Avery's sadistic ups and downs and create some nice contoured trail around the peaks!

Just Swingin' (Pulaskis) In the Rain Falls Branch Worktrip October 10

By Tom Keene

The forecast was for all day showers for our October 10 Georgia worktrip. Nevertheless seven hearty souls appeared, ready to take on still more side-hilling for the Falls Branch reroute – as well as the rain. In the event, we got quite a bit done in spite of the steady showers. The soft, damp soil made for good digging; our Pulaskis and McLeods got a good workout, and so did we. We advanced the reroute about 75 yards toward its terminus. Perhaps more important, we completed side-hilling of four or five very steep sections that previous crews had skipped over. Result: Future crews will have good footing all the way from the trailhead to the worksite.

A bit after noon the steady rain began to take its toll on the footing. Slippery ground and sharp tools are a bad combination, so we headed back to the trailhead and rinsed the mud off our tools off in the nearby creek. Then we had our lunch, tailgating BMTA style. Folks in Knoxville, Oxford and Baton Rouge had nothing on us. Special thanks to our damp but undaunted crew, seen below savoring the haute cuisine.



Tailgating BMTA-style. From left: Connor Bayliss, Steve Bayliss, Michael Bartell, Ken Cissna, Darcy Douglas, Frank Forehand. Photo by Tom Keene.

Special BMTA TN/NC Work Trip Heart of Darkness Section 16b Sledrunner Gap to Round Top October 20, 2015

by Rick Harris

This was the last section of the BMT in the TN/NC sector in bad need of brushing out. We had done the section just south of this in the Heart of Darkness a couple months ago, but we were still receiving reports of the heavy brush in the section just north of Round Top. So we organized this special work trip on a weekday to get 'er done. So we set out in the early Tuesday morning hours to the top of the world with temps in the 30s to start the day, but ending in the 60s. The weather was perfect for such an endeavor.

Seven of us cleared and logged the section of the BMT from Sledrunner Gap to Round Top. It was a long hard day, as was the last work trip from Round Top to Sandy Gap. Five of us entered from Beaverdam Bald (4259 foot elevation), and two from the manway below Round Top at 3698 feet elevation (Darcy Douglas, Kendall Hobson). Kendall used his brush cutter heading north, and Darcy painted blazes. The five who came in from Sledrunner Gap brushed out the trail (Rick Harris, Larry Van Dyke, Jack Callahan) or logged out the trail (Ken Jones and Phyllis Jones). We all got out very late, but before dark. So now the whole length of the infamous Heart of Darkness is now open and clear! Thru-hikers this spring should find the trail in great shape. But by fall the trail will be back to the same condition, its like pushing your way through African jungles. Nature has her ways to make life difficult for us maintainers.

Total volunteer hours for this trip were 90.5. This is a lot for just 7 people, by the way. Do the math yourself.

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip Section 12b Dry Pond Lead Trail to Kimsey Hwy October 24, 2015

by Rick Harris

Six maintainers cleared the section of the BMT from the intersection with the Dry Pond Lead Trail to the crossing over Kimsey Highway on Oct 24, 2015. We logged out the section with chainsaw in the non-wilderness area, and brushed out the whole trail with brushcutters in the non-wilderness areas and with swing blade/loppers in the wilderness areas. The section maintainer had previously cleared the section around the powerlines as well as logging out the section in the wilderness with a hand saw.



Total volunteer hours were 44.5 hours. Volunteers were Rick Harris, Brenda Harris, John Zardis, Zoe Zardis, Larry Van Dyke, and John Rowland.

We also looked over the recently logged out section along Kimsey Highway. It looks as if the logging is completed, so we can go in and repair the short stretch of trail affected by the logging operation. This short section will be difficult to maintain in the future since it will be in full sunlight.



Effects of logging on trail



Smiling Faces!

BMTA Receives Donation From GoPro

By Ralph Heller

This past month The BMTA received a donation of a GoPro Hero4 Black video camera and accessories from Wayne Sexton of Go Pro. Wayne is an avid hiker who enjoys hiking the BMT. The Hero4 Black is GoPro's top-of-the-line camera and has many advanced features including an interface which allows a smart phone to control the camera and display the video and pictures taken from the camera. We thank GoPro and Wayne for this donation which we plan to put to good use. Some uses we are considering are YouTube videos on Facebook showing BMTA activities. We also plan to interface video clips into our always evolving BMTA slide presentation. Other uses to be considered are creating videos to help with the training program we are developing.

Are there any video media folks out there who would like to volunteer their expertise? If so, let us know through the Contact Us page of the web site.



BMTA's New Tent attracts visitors at Arts in the Park

by Marcia Lehman

BMTA was excited about getting their new event tent in time for this year's Arts in the Park Festival in Blue Ridge, GA. October 10-11. The north Georgia Mountains, and especially the Blue Ridge area, attract many people because of the fall foliage, festivals and hiking opportunities that can be experienced during October each year. More than any other time of the year, hikers are drawn to this area and we were fortunate to have had scores of them stop by and talk with us. Often we had a tent full of people. We talked to "wanna be" hikers up to and including some that had completed the AT. Several joined BMTA on the spot. Many will very likely become members. Several expressed an interest in helping us with trail maintenance, as well. Overall, a very successful event for BMTA.



Staying Dry While Hiking

by Dick Hurd, MD

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

Avoiding getting wet while backpacking and hiking seems a desirable goal, but is it always possible? In 25 years of backpacking in all seasons and all types of weather, my answer is: **NO!** But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. There are benefits to remaining dry including:

- a) comfort: remember all that crying you did as an infant because of a wet diaper?
- b) warmth: heat loss is increased by a factor of 5 by wet clothing; this is important in cool or cold weather
- c) health: moist or wet skin is more susceptible to abrasion, chaffing, and blisters. So how then do we stay dry?

The problem is not rain and snow. There are many waterproof/water repellent fabrics used for raingear that will reliably keep the water out. **The problem is sweat**, the very normal and natural outcome of a process we call perspiration.

So, can we hike without sweating? If you walk very slowly, so as to not raise your pulse or breathe hard or "break a sweat", then the answer is 'maybe'. I have tried this, and if you have any hills, or want to get there 'today!', it is not practical. There are some people who claim they don't sweat, but for the rest of us, we are going to have to deal with all this unwanted moisture.

There are two types of fluid loss through the skin.

- **Insensible** water loss is a passive process where water passes in molecular fashion through the skin, just like water wicking through a fabric; this cannot be controlled or prevented; the evaporation of this fluid contributes to heat loss from the body, a benefit in warm weather.
- **Sweat**, on the other hand, is secreted by the sweat glands in an active process; sweating plays an important role in regulation of body temperature. While sweat too can evaporate, it can be produced in such volume as to saturate your clothing.

The physiology of sweating is intimately connected to the heat generated by muscular exercise. The ability to dissipate heat depends on the ability to produce and vaporize sweat, with the volume of sweat produced being generally proportional to the rate/amount of energy expended in exercise. Anyone who has carried a backpack up any mountain in Georgia knows this intuitively, and at the top of that mountain, I imagine your shirt was wet, or at least damp! The evaporation of sweat accounts for roughly 30% of your body's cooling at rest and 75% during activity, which can be good if you need to cool down, but when humidity exceeds 95%, evaporation ceases, so you are stuck with clothing that is wet and warm, and can trap heat in warm weather. The theoretical maximum rate of sweating in an adult is 50cc/minute or 2 liters/hour, and that's a lot of wet clothing!

So, how do we try to stay dry? I offer two strategies, one for summer and one for winter, and you adjust for the other seasons.

- **Summer:** Getting rid of excess heat is important, and sweating is desirable, so wear a light T-shirt or tank top, or no top (OK for the ladies if wearing a sports bra), and accept that they are going to get wet, but keep wet garments to a minimum and change into something dry when you get to camp. If it rains, just get wet: consider it a free shower. In the summer, using a rain coat & pants just creates a greenhouse and you will be soaked anyway plus your rain gear will be wet inside and out. Keep as much clothing as dry as possible for when you get to camp. If you hike with no shirt, be aware of increased risk of sunburn, insect bites, and watch for poison ivy, and chaffing from pack straps.
- **Winter:** The concern here is that wet clothes pose a risk for hypothermia. You will be wearing more clothing to stay warm. Unfortunately, all those miracle fabrics that promise to wick moisture away from your body can still become wet.

If you are wearing a rain jacket, the warm moist air is going to hit the cold shell and condense, and in time you will be both cold and wet. My habit is to wear as little as possible and still remain warm while hiking---shorts and a long sleeve synthetic shirt, and count on hiking to generate heat to keep you warm and evaporation to keep the clothing from getting too wet. When you stop to rest, cover up, or change into dry clothing. When it is very cold or windy, you have no choice but to add more layers; expect the inner layer to become damp. The worst scenario is when rain requires you to wear rain gear, maybe all day long. Just make absolutely certain you have something dry to change into once in camp.

A word about boots and socks. The feet can sweat profusely, and both boots and socks will become damp. I take a rest break mid-morning and mid-afternoon, take off by boots and socks, and let the feet and socks dry a bit. At noon, I change into fresh socks. I advise this for both comfort and blister prevention.

If anyone has a bullet proof suggestion for staying dry, or knows of some new miracle fabric, I would love to hear from you! See you on the trail.

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

Scarecrow Invasion !!

By Marcia Lehman

This year BMTA is participating in the 3rd annual Scarecrow Invasion in Ellijay, GA. Businesses, home owners, schools, churches and other organizations build their own themed scarecrows that are judged and awarded prizes. More than 130 scarecrows decorate the downtown area from October 1-31. They are displayed on every lamp post, in front of every store and in the town square. Marge Heller and Marcia Lehman created “Benton” to promote BMTA and positioned him on one of highest traffic volume streets in town. October is one of the busiest months of the year for locals and tourists to be out, so Benton got a lot of attention!



Major Milestones in History of BMT

- 1921 – Benton MacKaye publishes a visionary proposal for Appalachian Trail. His original proposal was from Mt. Washington in New Hampshire to Mount Mitchell in North Carolina. One of several possible extensions would have had the A.T. extend down the western crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains, a route that would serve as a general basis for the current one of the Benton MacKaye Trail.
- Mid 1970s – David Sherman, then with Georgia DNR and later with the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, conceives of the BMT as a primitive, less-crowded alternative to the A.T.
- 1980 – BMTA formed with initial leadership of six founding members. General trail route through Georgia is marked; exact route flagging and construction begin same year.
- 1989 – Initial construction in Georgia completed, and BMT opened from Springer Mountain, GA, 82 miles through the Chattahoochee National Forest to the GA/TN border at Double Spring Gap in the Cohutta Wilderness Area.
- 1992 – BMT extended in Tennessee through the Big Frog Wilderness Area to US-64 on the Ocoee River, bringing total distance to 93 miles.
- 2005 – Grand opening of entire 286 miles of the BMT from Springer Mountain through the Chattahoochee, Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.
- 2014 – Major reroute of BMT onto the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail (original A.T. route) to enter the Smokies at Fontana Dam thereby eliminating the BMT's longest roadwalk and facilitating compliance with the Smokies new Backcountry Reservation System.
- 2015 – Major reroute of BMT to cross the most scenic portion of the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock wilderness, directly tying into the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail. Total mileage after reroutes is 287 miles.

EASY TREK HIKE AND PICNIC TO BENTON FALLS, TENNESSEE OCTOBER 7, 2015

By Sara Bland, Photos courtesy Walter Polk & Al Cash

On a foggy Wednesday morning, 33 hikers stood in the fog at Home Depot in Blue Ridge to "sign-in". A short while after departure, the fog lifted and the sun shined on our beautiful route to Benton Falls, Tennessee in the Cherokee National Forest. The ride along the Ocoee River and up the Ocoee Scenic Bypass with two vista "stops" was a joyous one. At the trailhead, three groups were formed (according to self-perceived ability) to hike to the 65-foot falls. Hike leaders, Ken Cissna, Ann Miller, and Sara Bland, chose varied-length routes to the falls to give each group a choice of more or less hiking. The uniqueness of these falls is the epitome of Mother Nature's finest stone work. Upon arrival, we all paused to marvel at the magnificent site. They say "a picture is worth a thousand words" and so be it with those shown here. Our gratitude to our photographers, Walter Polk and Al Cash, for capturing spectacular memories for all of us.





A few good hikers who returned a little early to the picnic area, overlooking the beach and lake, began preparation for our "big spread." The red and white checked table cloths held a variety of delicious food including fried chicken, ham, pasta and green salads, appetizers, desserts, and you name it! Needless to say, we were a hungry bunch who devoured our vittles with great gusto and basked in the fellowship of our BMTA comrades!

So...hold those memories until next year's event to be held the third Wednesday in October, 2016. Until then, happy trails to all!!

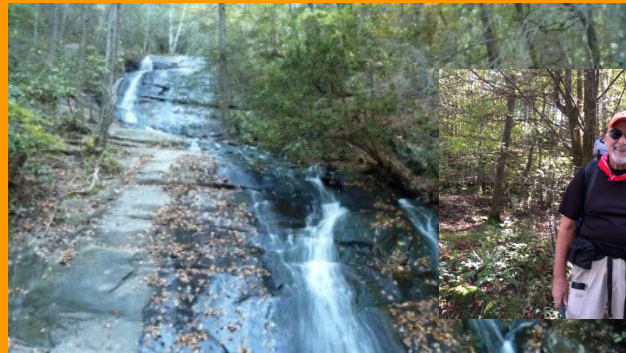
Encounters of the BMT Kind

by Kathy Williams and Hiker Eli

I am lucky enough to live within walking distance of the BMT. These past few weeks I have encountered thru hikers more frequently and I thought I would share some of comments about the trail. Kathy Williams (Can you spot the bear in his photos?)

Hello Kathy,

I had a great time hiking the BMT last week. I started on Monday at the TH at GA 60 and Wilscot Gap and finished at the Thunder Rock Campground on Saturday. Last Fall I hiked the section from Springer to Wilscot Gap. So with this hike I've complete the Georgia section of the trail – a very satisfying feeling. I've hiked several other trails but I found the BMT challenging, both physically and intellectually. Despite, what I thought was good planning, I lost the trail several times and had to back track, until I started to keep one eye looking forward and one looking back. The weather was perfect! I'd been talking about doing this section for sometime and then the week prior to hiking my wife showed me the weather forecast and said don't miss this opportunity. I met a few other hikers. On the second day I met two fellas out for a day hike and testing their new hiking equipment. That was the same day I met you and you put me back on the trail. I also met a group of 5 GA DNR officers out reviewing the trail. Overall, this was a great experience. The trail condition was great. Keep up your good work. I've attached some pictures from this trip. Feel free to use any you like. **Eli**



Upcoming Hikes

By Ralph Heller Hiking Director

November 6, 7 and 8 (Friday, Saturday & Sunday) – Annual Meeting Weekend
One hike Friday, two hikes Saturday, and two hikes Sunday. For information on hikes see article on Annual Meeting in this month's issue of the newsletter.

Tuesday November 17 Dry Pond Lead/Rock Creek Trail

- **Hike Description: 7.3 miles –moderate**

Hike will begin at the Dry Pond Lead/Benton MacKaye Trail trailhead just across from the Thunder Rock Campground at Ocoee Power station #3. It will follow the border of the Little Frog Wilderness until it meets the junction with the Rock Creek Trail at 1.9 miles. The hike will then enter the Little Frog wilderness and follow the Rock Creek Trail back to highway 64 east of the Ocoee Whitewater Center. There should be some good views along the way with the leaves recently fallen from trees. Short shuttle required on US 64 between starting and ending locations. Bring plenty of water and lunch.

For more information and to register for the hike and get meeting time and location, contact hike leaders Ed and Clare Sullivan phone 404-849-0872 email clare7982 AT

*** 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.

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 Thanksgiving the deadline for November is Sunday November 22

Thank you !