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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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President's Column April 2016 by Bob Ruby

The Sad Death of a Trail Worker

On Friday, April 15, I was saddened to hear of the death of Al Bolden, a volunteer doing trail maintenance on the BMT. Al was with a group of fellow employees from AT&T on a corporate volunteer day. He suddenly collapsed and died shortly after the group sat down for lunch. BMTA's Phil Guhl, who also works for AT&T in Atlanta, has provided us with a remembrance which is included separately in this issue. My condolences and those of other members of BMTA go to Al Bolden's family and friends in this time of grief.

After several discussions with Barry Allen, I have some comments to share:

- I believe that Barry, Phil and the rest of the crew did an exemplary job before, during and after the incident. Nevertheless we all feel that there are lessons to be learned from our after-action analysis of the event.
- A thorough Tailgate Safety Briefing was conducted before the event. As usual a sign-in sheet was completed by everyone before starting that included an emergency contact number. Mr. Bolden provided his home number. Unfortunately no one was home until late that evening, and there was no alternate contact for the Sheriff's office to use in notifying his next of kin. This could have been even more critical had medical authorizations been required.
- One thing we learned from this is to encourage participants to also list the work and/or cellphone numbers of their emergency contacts on the sign-in sheet. I personally have always included ICE (In Case of Emergency) identification on the key contacts in my cellphone, assuming that EMT personnel would be able to access it. I learned from this event that they can't easily bypass the password to get this info so I now have it displayed on the Personal Information scroll on my lock screen. Instructions for updating cellphone ICE information can be found at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2489237,00.asp>. (Note: I don't think the Android widget app mentioned in the article still works after security enhancements in 5.0+. That's why I used the scroll.) In addition, I have my emergency contacts listed on a form in my wallet.

- During the Tailgate Safety Briefing, Barry and Phil encouraged anyone having significant medical conditions to share them with one of the First Aid trained volunteers. Mr. Bolden did not state any medical issues. His wife reported he had no issues and was a regular walker. (In my case I share that I take a blood thinner for atrial fibrillation, which could be essential information to guide treatment if I am injured and unable to communicate.) It is certainly each individual's personal decision what information to share, but those involved will always put more emphasis in the future on encouraging private disclosure to a First Aid lead (or his backup, if the lead has a medical condition). I also encourage everyone to carry this sort of info on a form in their wallet. The form that I carry can be found at: <http://acdb.avalution.com/card/form.php>.
- We don't know if there was any advance warning that could have made a difference in this situation, but we should all listen to our bodies. Rest and communicate if you feel weak, tired or have any other unusual symptoms. As we age there is no glory in pushing ourselves to be young again. Do not let pride go before a fall...speak up. If you notice a fellow worker who may be having a problem, see if he is OK and encourage him/her to take care of himself/herself or to ask for help.
- In this case there was good cellphone coverage at the site of the incident, and the team did everything possible to expedite the arrival of 911 emergency personnel as soon as possible. During this interval, Barry and Phil gave continuous CPR to no avail, nor was the first responder's defibrillator effective.

This tragedy emphasized the importance of planning cellphone and/or radio communications for emergencies. BMTA and several of our maintenance leaders have acquired and programmed portable ham radios for locations without viable cellphone coverage. In addition we will soon be starting a program to determine which parts of the trail have good cellphone coverage, which varies by provider. When we have this program organized, I'll let you know and will solicit input from members and others hiking on the BMT to gather this data.

- Barry has previously worked as an EMT. Phil Guhl was CPR/First Aid trained and, as a result of this incident, plans to enroll in a more advanced Wilderness First Responder certification class. If you would like to help Phil pay for this training, go to www.gofundme.com/2zg7tcx4. Several BMTA Board members and friends at AT&T have already chipped in.

I am sure that other lessons will be learned as we continue to think through the response to this tragedy. I have no doubt that you will see an increased emphasis on these items for our workdays and recreational hikes. We all have to recognize that occasionally these tragedies occur, especially as we get older. Unfortunately they happen in everyday living as well as on the trail. Last month I wrote about the beauty of being on the trail in springtime, and this tragedy happened on a gorgeous day. This month my column has not been so upbeat.



Alvin Bernard “Snag” Bolden

December 5, 1954 – April 15, 2016

By Phil Guhl



Alvin “Snag” Bolden was an AT&T employee who chose to use his “AT&T Community Volunteer Day” to work on the Benton MacKaye Trail on Friday, April 15, 2016. He called late on the evening before the work trip to see if it was too late to sign up. He had an excitement in his voice and said he was looking forward to this since he didn’t know if he would ever have this sort of opportunity again.

After climbing Section 2c from Sapling Gap, the crew worked until it broke for lunch. After sitting down to eat, Al collapsed. Despite the efforts of many, he never regained consciousness and died.

At his funeral, it was learned that Al was a giver. All of his life was spent helping others. He was the Chairman of the Deacons at his church, The Olivet Church in Fayetteville, Georgia. He was a husband to Brenda and a father to Muriel and Morgan. He was also a son caring for his aging parent. Amongst these loves, which he was dedicated to, was his fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi and his Alma mater: Alabama A&M. Al held a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and an MBA.

Al had worked at AT&T for over 38 years. He repeatedly turned down promotions and greater opportunities because he was concerned the new roles would take time away from his church and his family. With over 400 people at his funeral, there were numerous testimonies to his lifelong commitment to serving others. In addition to being a Deacon, a husband, a father, and a son, Al was a mentor, encourager, counselor, and overall servant to others.

Al will be missed.

TN/NC Work Trip - March 26, 2016

By Ken Jones

The weather cooperated and gave us a beautiful spring day for the monthly work trip in the Tellico Ranger District. We had the right mix of seven volunteers to allow us to work on both BMT Sections 16d and 16e. We needed to log out Section 16d with the crosscut saw, and Section 16e with the chainsaw. Sometimes it is hard for us to get the right mix to accomplish multiple objectives requiring certified volunteers. However, thanks to Philip and Debra Guhl driving up from Georgia, we accomplished all that we had planned. We started the day by staging vehicles at the Fish Hatchery on the Tellico River and Campsite 11 on the Bald River Road. We then drove in three miles on the Sugar Mountain Road to the spot where the BMT crosses this road. We started the work day by installing a wilderness type sign on the section that heads down to the Bald River in the Wilderness Study Area.



The uglier members of the trail crew with the new sign!!

One crew, led by Rick Harris, went down this section logging out and brushing out the trail. Other crew members were Philip Guhl, Debra Guhl, and John Kalabus. They were able to brush out all of the section and log out most of it. Since it had rained over an inch on the previous Thursday night, the crew got to negotiate three fairly high water crossings. The other crew, led by yours truly, headed down the other section toward the Fish Hatchery to log out the trail. This section had recently been brushed out by the section maintainer, Ralph Van Pelt, so we just had to clear the blow downs with the chainsaw. Other crew members working on this section were Phyllis Jones and Jack Callahan. We cleared all of the trees on the section and then started the slow drive to retrieve my truck. The other work crew had to walk twice the distance, so they were late getting back to Tellico Plains for supper.

Thanks to all of our volunteers for completing a safe, long, and productive work trip!



Debra and Phil negotiate the lower crossing of the Bald River

New Business Venture Launched on Georgia's BMT

Work Trip Report for April, 2016

by Barry Allen

The second Saturday in April was reserved for Section 4. My work plan for this area of the trail began to take shape the first time I walked the area several years ago: challenging hiking, glorious vistas, and amazing landscape accentuated with a smattering of 1940's and 50's vintage appliances left for our enjoyment. Contemplating the problem of moving appliances from the side of a mountain trail, I surmised the first challenge was to figure out how to get a group of volunteers dumb – uh, enthusiastic -- enough, to move appliances from the flank of Wilscot Mountain to the parking area at Wilscot Gap. The second, and more critical challenge, was to figure out how I could share in the credit without actually doing any of the work. A plan began to take shape over a cold beverage late one night.

Step 1: Plan for a medical problem before April trip. Gallbladder removal.

“Doc, how long can I milk – er, use – this surgery as a work excuse.”

“Well, Mr. Allen, gallbladder surgery isn't like it used to be. You should be up and around in a couple of days.”

“Well, Doc, would you recommend that I be involved in moving appliances up and down a mountain.”

“Mr. Allen, in general, I wouldn't recommend this activity for any sane 50 something year old man.”

“Thanks Doc. That's all I needed.” Doctor's excuse. Check.

Step 2: Find someone else to lead the trip, but agree to help shuttle folks with your truck so you can claim credit for actual work. Tom Keene and Larry Dumas. Great leaders, enthusiastic, gullible.

“Tom and Larry, are you guys up for leading the trip next month? I have a pretty serious medical problem and I really need your help. You'd love to help out. Great! I'll send you details in a couple of days. I've got you down.” Alternate leaders. Check.

As further details worked themselves out, it looked like I was home free: A great group of volunteers, exceptional leaders and an opportunity to take credit for everyone else's work! But I just hadn't planned on Tom getting wise to the situation. When Tom called and said that he hurt his back working with a fellow BMTA member at the Botanical Gardens, I tried to explain that he should still be O.K. to lead the trip. After all, he would only be moving a few appliances -- and you're supposed to lift with your legs, not your back! “You really don't have a problem with your legs, do you Tom?”

It was a no go. I guess you have to be pretty smart to be a college professor.

Who else is a good leader, enthusiastic, and.....gullible? Phil Guhl. Yeah, let's give him a call.

“Hey Phil, something came up with Tom and I need a leader for Saturday. “

“Is this the appliance trip?”

“Well.....maybe.”

“I don't think I'm feeling very well, Barry. I never get sick, but I just haven't been up to snuff the last few days. In fact, I've never felt worse than I do right now.

“All right Phil. I get it.”

So when Saturday rolled around, I was sort of in a jamb. Larry had agreed to take one group in from Payne Gap and work back to Wilscot, clearing trees and brush along the way. But I was still trying to work out the dilemma of managing the second group when I rolled into Wilscot at 9:00 on Saturday morning. Eureka! That's it! Marty Dominy would be the perfect choice! After all, this is his section and he should know exactly what needs to be done.



There was a large group circled around George's truck as I slammed my car door in the parking area; something just didn't look quite right. George and Darcy were exchanging items that looked suspiciously like dollar bills and writing notes on the sign in sheet. Turns out, Darcy was giving odds on just how late Marty would be getting to Wilscot; George, on the other hand, wanted all the action he could get. I tried to explain that the BMTA did not sanction gambling, but was told in no uncertain terms to mind my own business.

In an effort to break up the illicit activity, I remembered George's advice from earlier in the week: George called me up and said "now, Barry, if you really plan to get those appliances out of the way, let me give you a suggestion." "Sure George, go right ahead. I've never had to move appliances off a mountain so I'm willing to listen to all the advice you can give me."

"You've got 12 or 15 people coming on Saturday, right? So if you really want to get those appliances off the mountain sometime this year, then ask Darcy to work just as far away as possible from the main group; that'll save you at least 11 different opinions on the best way to get things done."

"OK, George. I planned on taking a group into Payne Gap anyway. There's quite a bit of blazing that should be touched up. Darcy would be the perfect person to work this section." Long story short, I grabbed Darcy, Gilbert and Larry, shoved them in the truck, handed George some flags and said, "Here George, you figure it out. I'll be back in a couple of hours. And here's a five spot on Marty for one hour or less."





When I rolled back into Wilscot a couple of hours later, I was astounded at the pile of appliances waiting to be hauled off to the scrap yard. In my most optimistic moment, I had only expected to get half the appliances off the mountain. As I walked up the trail wondering what had spurred such tremendous activity from this over-the-hill gang, I noticed Bob Sloan man-handling a 50 year old range straight up a 50 yard embankment toward the trail. And just as impressive -- Doug Kleiber, Charlie Fehnel, and Bob Cowdrick were rolling an overloaded cart from the flank of Wilscot toward Wilscot Gap some distance away. What in the world was going on?



Then my eyes drifted another 20 yards uphill. I knew instantly what was propelling my group of volunteers up and down Wilscot Mountain: thoughts of the opposite S-E-X. It was nothing short of amazing. Here were two lovely young ladies seemingly mesmerized by our activity, both wearing hip-hugging hiking pants and tight sweaters that left no doubt as to the true blessings available in nature. My volunteers were suddenly 20 year old youths with their guts sucked to their backbones, eager to show off their manly prowess.

As I watched the two beauties disappear along the trail, I slid down the slope toward Bob, ready to offer a hand moving the last appliance the remaining 5 feet to the trail. Bob had an odd look on his face as he kneeled under the old range ready to give it one last heave. "Bob, that was amazing. If I hadn't actually seen you moving that appliance straight up-hill, I wouldn't have believed it." Bob still had a slightly pained expression on his face, but didn't move a muscle. "It's OK, Bob. Those two little gals just disappeared around the bend toward Lula Head Gap."

A look of relief combined with a touch of hope appeared on Bob's face as he uttered the next memorable words: "I think I've ruptured myself. You think they can fit me on the next cart back to Wilscot Gap?"

What a job by our group of 13 volunteers on Saturday, the 9th!!!! After 77 man-hours of labor, we succeeded in removing the pile of appliances that had been sitting along the path since before it was the BMT. We hauled two full truckloads of appliances to a local scrap yard, installed or cleaned 20 water diversions, cleared 3.2 miles of trail from recent blowdowns, refreshed blazes, re-installed signage at Payne Gap, cleared away several unwanted campsites (as well as cleaning one camp site that will remain at Payne), and set up one collection point for water at Payne Gap's clear flowing spring. During the work trip, Marty pulled me aside and said he had wanted to get rid of those appliances for all of the 30 years he has worked this section. But it just wasn't a one man job. So let me pass along his thanks to all of our volunteers:

Larry Dumas, Gilbert Treadwell and Darcy Douglas hiked the trail from Payne to Wilscot and left the trail in fantastic shape. Michael Bartell, Frank Forehand, Doug Kleiber, Bob Cowdrick, Charlie Fehnel, Bob Sloan, George Owen, Marty Dominy and Mike Kovitch fought the appliance battle up and down Wilscot all day long. Thanks to all, and especially to new member Mike Kovitch for all of the wonderful pictures of the day. And a special note of gratitude to Marty Dominy who made a seven hour round-trip drive to join us on Saturday.

As we kick off our new business venture, please keep us in mind for your next move. Remember, if you want your appliances to look like they've spent the last 60 years in the woods, then give us a call for your moving needs. Our motto is "We'll move anything for B.M.T.A." (And T.A. doesn't mean Trail Association.)

Hope to see you all next month as we visit Section 5 in the Merry Old Month of May!



TN/NC April Work Trip

By Ken Jones



Rick Harris, Ken Jones and Judy Norton move the big rock off the trail

We had another nice day for the April work trip on BMT Section 12e along Big Lost Creek. This is certainly one of the most beautiful sections of the BMT in Tennessee, as the trail is routed on an old logging railroad grade right beside numerous cascades and pools. Wildflowers were also in abundance for the workers to enjoy. We had a large work crew of 10 volunteers that turned out, with four of these making their first work trip with us. We split into two crews to tackle the two objectives for this work trip. One crew worked to widen the tread in an area that is continuing to slough off into the creek near the Little Lost Creek confluence. The tread width was down to about 12" between a big rock on one side and a straight drop of about 10' to the creek on the other side. This spot certainly fit the definition of being "between a rock and a hard spot". We were able to move a large rock out of the way, and get a safer tread width of about 24". We still need to come back with the Cobra-Combi hammer/drill at a future date to complete the work of chipping out more rock.



Sherry Neidich and Phyllis Jones spread gravel on the trail as Drew drives the UTV

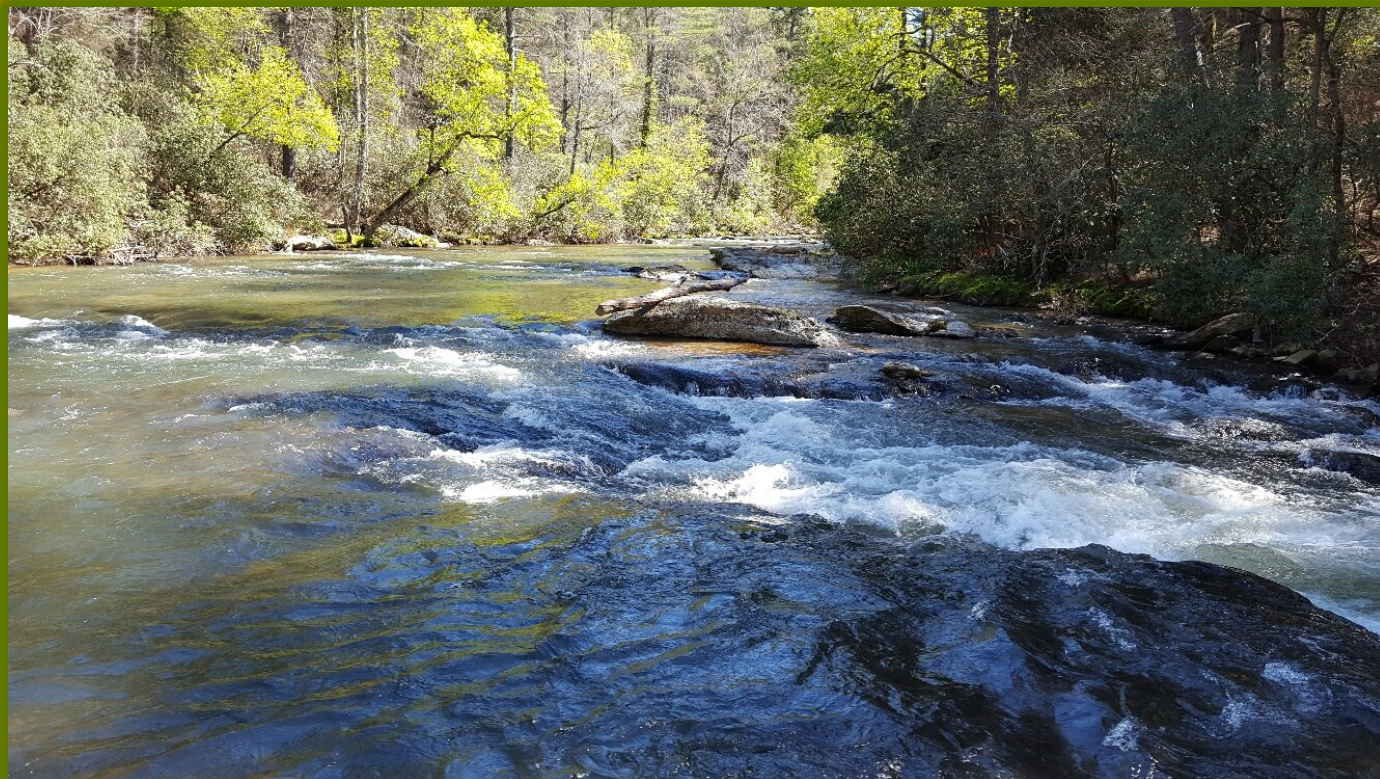
The other crew worked on spreading gravel in wet spots on the trail just downstream from Lost Creek Campground. This work was especially important since this first one-half mile of trail is used by the Forest Service every other Friday to stock trout. This crew worked with Drew McCarley, acting Trails Technician, Ocoee Ranger District, as he hauled about four tons of gravel from the campground to be spread along the muddy areas of the trail.

Thanks to the following volunteers who turned in another safe day working on the Benton MacKaye Trail : Larry Van Dyke, Richard Harris, Claire Sullivan, Ed Sullivan, Judy Norton, Sherry Neidich, Caleb Redick, Ridge Sliger, Phyllis Jones, and Ken Jones.

A special thanks to Drew who staged the gravel at the campground, and hauled gravel for us with the Forest Service utility vehicle!

Cartecay River Loop Trail

By Marcia Lehman



What a beautiful day for a hike as 21 of us set upon the four miles Cartecay River Loop trail on Saturday, April 16 !! This is an easy hike along the scenic Cartecay River. There is a great spot on the river where we all took in the views and sounds of the river while enjoying our lunch!



Tour of Towee Creek Reroute Highlights the Allure of “Hiking the BMT in Tennessee”

By Joy Forehand

Following the April 16 Board Meeting, Board Members Bob Ruby, Ken Cissna, Ken Jones, Larry Dumas, Mike Pilvinsky and Joy Forehand along with BMTA Members Ralph Heller and Phyllis Jones toured the recently completed Towee Creek reroute. Construction on the .97-mile project originally began in November, 2015. Volunteers from BMTA, Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen as well as USFS employees worked together to complete approximately 2,650’ of new trail. Four Switchback structures and two retaining walls, including the connecting tread, were constructed by the Southeast Conservation Corp.



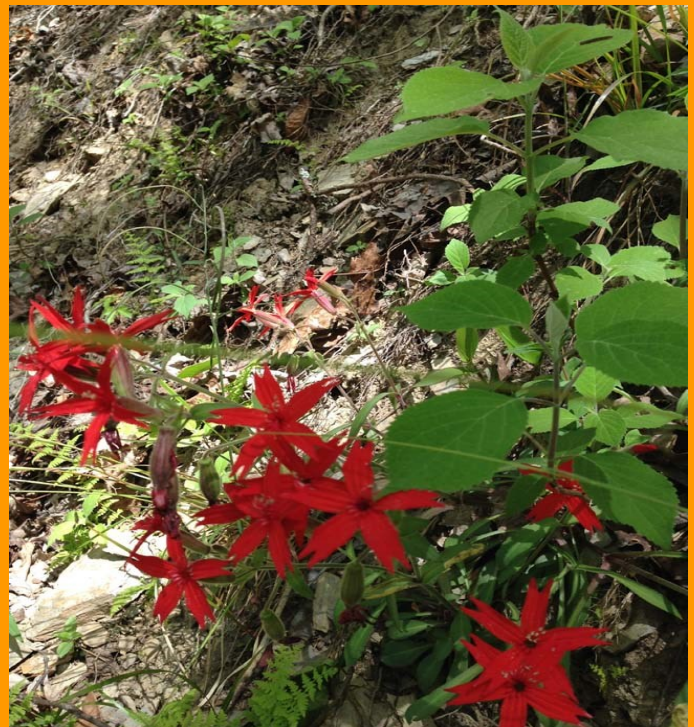
In view of the difficult, steep terrain, impressive is the word that came to mind as the hikers negotiated the numerous switchbacks up the mountain side. Beautiful spring flowers dotted the landscape ... Wild Iris, Purple Fringed Phacelia, Fire Pink, yellow Trillium Luteums, and Violets.



Trillium Luteums



Purple Fringed Phacelia



Fire Pink



Towee cribbing

The scenic view from the switchbacks was even more striking as the hikers looked down on the Hiwassee River framed by mountains in the distance.

It was evident why Bob Ruby encourages hiking the BMT in Tennessee and North Carolina where the backcountry solitude reigns supreme as hikers are treated to scenic vistas from numerous balds, lush forest vegetation, meandering streams and cascading waterfalls.



Towee Trail

Enjoyable day hikes in Tennessee that are just an hour's drive from Blue Ridge include:

BMT Section 11e (FS 221 to Ocoee River / US 64). *The Benton MacKaye Trail Guide, Tennessee/North Carolina* describes this hike as: “The highlights of this section are the Ocoee River and the Ocoee #3 Powerhouse at US 64 on the lower end and an old growth forest on the upper end. Also at this location is the Thunder Rock Campground with hot showers in season. About a mile and a half east on US64 is the Ocoee Whitewater Center, location of the 1996 Whitewater Summer Olympics. The Whitewater Center is best reached by hiking the Rhododendron Trail, connected to the BMT on the south side of the river by the bridge.”

BMT's Sections 12-13 (Lost Creek Campground to the Hiwassee River). The Cherokee Hiking Club describes this segment as: “This segment of the BMT is especially beautiful as it follows along the edge of Lost Creek. This is a moderately sized creek that flows through a rock-lined gorge down to the Hiwassee River. There are many great places for a quick dip in the creek. The trail is fairly level except near each end where there is an elevation change of about 200 feet.”

BMT Section 14 (TN68 to Unicoi Gap). *The Benton MacKaye Trail Guide, Tennessee/North Carolina* describes this hike as: “The trail follows the ridge crest all the way to Unicoi Gap. Most of this section of trail is a designated motorcycle trail. Buck Bald, a short distance up the Buck Bald Road FR 198 from the trail, has a 360 degree view of the surrounding mountains. A side trip up FR 198 is well worth the effort and it is only a 0.8 mile round trip. Unicoi Gap is near the TN/NC state line and is a site on the historic Unicoi Turnpike National Historic Trail, which intersects the BMT just south of Unicoi Gap. This trail, which spanned the Cherokee Nation, reached from near Savannah to the Little Tennessee River. It is said to have been in use for over 1,000 years. It was called the Tellico Path, the Overhill Trading Path, and the Great Trading Path. In 1812, it became a 12 foot wagon road called the Unicoi Turnpike with a tollgate at Unicoi Gap. After the Cherokee Removal, it became known as a part of the Trail of Tears.”

For additional information and directions to trailheads for these and other BMT hikes, check out the *Benton MacKaye Trail Guide Tennessee/North Carolina*.

More Young People in the Forest!

By Darcy Douglas

During their recent spring break, five middle and high school youth from North Springs United Methodist Church in Sandy Springs, GA, had their first experience on trails in the forest! Worries were expressed about snakes, bears, and more while driving in the morning, but by the end of the day there were nothing but smiles!!! We hiked from Three Forks in Georgia south on the Benton MacKaye Trail, ate lunch atop Rich Mountain, then came back via the Appalachian Trail. While we saw no one else on the BMT (surprise!), we saw many, many people on the AT, including quite a number of through hikers. Despite it being a Monday, there was a surprising amount of traffic! Andy Williams, who began the plan for introducing young city people to an authentic hiking experience, provided real trail lunches which involved the kids choosing the pieces and parts at the trailhead from his truck, then assembling their burritos at the lunch site. There were enough challenges that the kids felt they had really hiked, but it wasn't so stressful that they wouldn't ever want to come back. It was a great bonding experience! Doug Caudill, the Youth Minister at the church, watched and enjoyed as all five of them splashed in Chester Creek at the end of the day. I was quite impressed that all of them brought dry clothes and managed to change into them (they were all soaked!) in true trail fashion. Several of these youth show promise of being leaders of others, so we were happy to show them this new way to enjoy our world! Perhaps they will bring others out in the future! Appreciation was expressed for those who build and maintain the trails, which was nice. The hikers were Jasmine Harris, Taylani Harris, Kamryn Monley, Knesha Wilkes, and Rayquan Wilkes.



SIGHTS OF THE BENTON MACKAYE

By Barry Allen aka BMTA Lover of Flowers



Each spring along the Benton MacKaye, we look forward to a profusion of wildflowers to signal in the arrival of one of the showiest times of the year. Dwarf Violet Iris is a personal favorite, and this picture was taken in early April along Section 4, not far from Payne Gap. In Georgia, we are blessed with two Dwarf Iris species: **Dwarf Violet Iris, *Iris Verna*** and **Dwarf Crested Iris or *Iris Cristata***. While both species may have a showy violet to pale blue flower, there are several simple ways to tell the two variations apart. In addition to an obvious crest or area of raised tissue visible on the crested iris, perhaps the easiest way to tell the two apart is well pictured in the photo. With Dwarf Violet Iris, the flower appears **before** the foliage, looking as if someone dropped a flower on the floor of the forest. With crested iris specimens, the foliage appears first, followed by a more typical flower sitting atop the greenery. Two weeks after taking this picture, I noticed a profusion of the crested variety blooming along FS 46, not far from the access trail to the AT and Springer Mountain.

Celebrate National Trails Day 2016!

Where: Vogel State Park, Pavilion #2

When: June 4, 2016

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. 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 American 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

Leader: Lawson Herron – GATC

9:00 – 12:00 Invasive Plant Eradication

Leader: Laura Northrop – GATC

9:00 – 12:00 Family Friendly Hikes (open to the public)

Leader: George Owen – GATC, MHH, BMTA

12:00 – 1:30 Covered Dish Luncheon with program during lunch

Co-Leaders: Melanie Spamer and Kathy Chastain – GATC, Candy Retter - MHH

Luncheon Program:

Welcome to Vogel: Jennifer Jones – Vogel State Park Manager

Recognition: USFS: Andy Baker, District Ranger, BRRD

GATC: Don Hicks, President

BMTA: Bob Ruby, President

MHH: Tom Shope, President

SEFTC: Darcy Douglas, President

GFW: Sue Harmon

SAWS: Bill Hodge invited

Game: A.T. Challenge

• 1:30 – until Enjoy the lake, go fishing, go hiking, visit with hiking pals!

Come prepared for your activity: work gloves, sturdy shoes or boots, water, snack, etc.; plan ahead to keep hot food hot or cold food cold for safety prior to the meal; and bring a folding chair or two as seating may be limited during the luncheon.

To register

- for trail work, contact Lawson (lawson144 AT charter.net or 770-993-5231);
- for family friendly hiking contact George (gowen2 AT tds.net or 760-374-4716);
- for conservation contact Laura (bdnlvn AT bellsouth.net or 770-392-0528);
- for other information, contact Joe Boone (booned AT windstream.net or 760-835-2269).

(A large measure of credit goes to Joe Boone for organizing this joint event and for creating this write up.)

Separate BMTA event in TN/NC on June 11:

In addition to this NTD celebration in Georgia, the TN/NC contingent of BMTA has scheduled an event jointly with the Boy Scouts on June 11. The focus there will be maintenance on the Warrior's Passage National Recreation Trail which goes down the other side of Waucheesee Mountain from the the BMT.

For more information about this event, watch the bmta.org Activities Page or contact Rick Harris.

BMTA MAY WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

By Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Section 5
 - ◆ **When:** Saturday, May 14, 2016, 9:00 AM
 - ◆ **Meet:** Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 or GA 60 at Wilscot Gap, 9:00.
 - ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Discussion of emergency procedures, followed by brush and tree removal.
 - ◆ **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
- Please join us for our May work trip as we meet on Section 5 at Wilscot Gap.

This work trip will be somewhat different from recent work events. Before beginning the work day, I plan to discuss the recent trail emergency that occurred while we led a group of volunteers from AT&T to work on Section 2. The end of that April day saw the death of a unique individual who chose to help the BMTA on a volunteer work day. The most important thing I hope to accomplish on May 14 will be to have us all think about handling trail emergencies before they happen. Phil Guhl and I learned more about trail emergencies in an unforgettable day than most people will think about in 30 years of hiking. **So whether you are a section maintainer, a hike leader, a hike participant, or a regular work volunteer, please join us for an hour or two, as I go through an April day and all of the learning that transpired.**

My plan for the day is to begin with our normal tailgate safety session and then progress into a short hike on Section 5 while talking about the types of issues that were dealt with before, during and after a trail 'event'. I expect to spend from 90 minutes to two hours working through the types of issues that you can expect to see during an emergency. By 11:00 AM, many of you may wish to leave for the day. For those who can stay and help, we will divide into two teams and focus on tree and brush removal on a couple of different areas of this section. I hope to wrap things up before 3:00 and send everyone on their way.

Memorial Day Parade Blairsville, GA-May 28, 2016

You are encouraged to join members of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, Mountain High Hikers, and Benton MacKaye Trail Club as we march in the Blairsville parade to celebrate Memorial Day. Hikers will march behind a banner that designates Blairsville as an Appalachian Trail Community, one of 39 along the Appalachian Trail. Participants are encouraged to dress like hikers with a day or overnight pack. Some trail club members are thinking about bringing a trail maintenance tool to carry in the parade. The parade starts at 10 am. Participants are also welcome to attend an 11 am Memorial Day Ceremony at the Union County Memorial Park near the start/finish point of the parade. A Blairsville Arts and Crafts Festival, with live music will be occurring on the Old Courthouse Square on both Saturday and Sunday. So come join us as we march to honor our veterans. To sign up for the parade or to obtain more information, please contact Joe Boone at booned AT windstream.net or [706-835-2269](tel:706-835-2269). Let's show the public how it is done!

I look forward to working with you and members of the BMTA to make this event one to remember. Please contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Thanks.

Joe Boone

2016 GATC Information and Education Director [706-835-2269](tel:706-835-2269)

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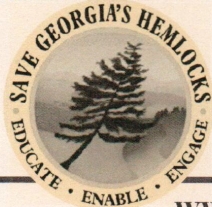
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May Hikes & Events

By Mike Pilvinski Hiking Director

In May, we will have four hiking activities. We will welcome Sara Bland back to the mountains with a beautiful hike along the banks of Carters Lake on the 11th. On the 21st-22nd our backpackers will hike from Three Forks to HW 60 on the BMT. Along the way they will camp overnight under the iconic swinging bridge. On the 25th we will be back in Tennessee as Rick and Brenda Harris lead us up Bob Bald. Then on Saturday, May 28 there will be a joint BMTA/Sierra Club hike to the swinging bridge from HW 60. It should be a fun month with a little something for everyone!

May 11-Carters Lake Easy 5 miles on the Amadahy Trail at Carters Lake outside Ellijay. Contact hike leader Sara Bland: (jsbland AT wind stream.net).

May 21st 22nd-Backpacking Trip: Moderate backpacking trip along the Benton MacKaye Trail from Three Forks to Highway 60, camping under the iconic swinging bridge at the Toccoa River. Twelve miles in two days. Contact: hike leader (mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com).

May 25th-Bob Bald Moderate 7 miles in TN and NC. Contact hike leaders Rick or Brenda Harris at 423-253-6358.

May 28th-Swinging Bridge BMTA and Sierra Club are co-sponsoring a hike on section 2 of the Benton MacKaye Trail on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. We will be hiking from highway 60 to the Swinging Bridge over the Toccoa River and back. The number of participants on this hike will be limited to 12 so reserve your place early. Priority to BMTA and SC members. The total hike will be 7+ miles; pace will be moderate. We will enjoy a leisurely lunch by the river. To register, contact Ken Cissna at kcissna AT sf.edu or [706-636-1741](tel:706-636-1741).

* 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 closures 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 closed during logging operations, 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 deadline for articles for the May Newsletter is Wednesday May 25, 2016
Thanks for your support!!!!**