



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 33, ISSUE 6

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President's Column June 2016 by Bob Ruby

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Time to Make Reservations!

Have you made your reservations for the annual meeting at the beautiful Tapoco Lodge the weekend of November 4-6th? If not be sure to look for details in this newsletter. **Make sure to ask for the BMTA meeting rate.** Don't miss out on this great weekend!

Hot Weather Hiking and Maintaining

Summer is officially here! The Western US is suffering all-time record highs, and the heat will find its way to the Southeast before long. It's appropriate to share a few reminders about dealing with high temperatures during outdoor activity (not that this will all be new to most of you). I wrote a longer item on the subject in the June, 2015 newsletter which I encourage you to review again at: <http://bmta.org/nl/BMTANewsletterJune2015.pdf>

Heat generally becomes a real danger when the temperature is over 90° and the relative humidity is over 70%. This makes the Heat Index 105°. The Caution Range starts at 80° with moderate humidity.

Stay well hydrated with at least 2-3 liters of water, and avoid or reduce your outdoor activity on the hottest days.

Yesterday, the first day of summer, having written a draft of this item, I went on a hike at the Chattahoochee River NRA with my Tuesday morning group, and two of us were stung by yellow jackets. Fortunately neither of us needed an Epi-Pen, and I had some Benadryl in my First-Aid kit. Be sure to note the section of last year's column about insect and snake activity.

New BMTA Insurance Policies

BMTA recently acquired liability and medical insurance policies to supplement the protection that is provided by the Volunteer in the Forests and Volunteer in the Parks programs while working on Federal lands. An example of part of this new protection is that it provides for volunteers working on private lands, like the workday in the Sisson Cherry Log development scheduled for July.



BMTA Headquarters

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There are many details that determine whether a specific incident is covered. They are too numerous and complicated to summarize quickly, but here are a few key items of which you should be aware:

- The policies do not cover driving to activities. That is still dependent on the automobile policy and/or your personal medical coverage.
- Payments are coordinated with other overlapping coverages (personal, Federal, etc.). Again the details of this determination can be complex when multiple policies are involved. The first thing the claims forms ask is whether there is other coverage.
- The AD&D policy, which provides medical benefits, states that if the injured party has an HMO or PPO plan that they should stay in their network, or else benefits under this policy will be reduced by 50%. I suggest that you try to stay in your network, with the obvious exception of emergency situations.

Be sure to sign-in for activities, since covered persons under the AD&D policy include:

- All designated, recorded Volunteers participating in a volunteer project through the Organization's program
- All registered Participants participating in supervised and sponsored Organization activities.

The details and limits of the coverages are defined in the policies. Should you have an incident that may be covered, we will provide you with the policies and claims forms. I hope claims are few and far between.

Wilderness Skills Institute

I had a chance to attend the Wilderness Skills Institute (WSI) again this year and want to complement Bill Hodge (SAWS Executive Director and former BMTA Board member) and his co-sponsors in the US Forest Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy on another outstanding session. Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) is an independent, non-profit offshoot of the Wilderness Society dedicated to providing stewardship to protected public lands in the Southern Appalachian region. Without SAWS' support BMTA would be hard pressed to maintain all of the BMT portions in wilderness areas.

The two week WSI offers a wide range of courses:

- **Basic** trail maintenance -primarily for summer youth hires who will be maintaining trails in wilderness areas.
- **More advanced** courses-Wilderness First Aid & building backcountry structures using native materials and traditional tools.
- **High-level** courses on wilderness management.

The attendees cover a wide range: summer SAWS hires, trail club representatives like Rick Harris and myself, local Forest Service field staff and managers, as well as representatives from the Forest Service regional and national offices. The instructors are among the best in their fields on the national level.

Interestingly, this year there was a group of six Midshipmen (persons) from the Naval Academy. Annapolis had reached out to Bill Hodge based on reports by a current student leader at the Academy who described his experience with SAWS as the most influential element in his rise from the inner city to the Academy. The six attendees, selected from 150 applicants, spent two weeks at WSI learning wilderness management skills, before a week of putting them into practice in the wilderness and then returning to their next summer development sessions. Hopefully this experience will result in several of them developing into outdoors leaders later in their lives.

My thanks to Bill Hodge and his co-leader Chris Ham, the new Wilderness program manager for the Forest Service Southern Region, for putting together a truly excellent program to enhance wilderness management skills of the participating organizations. WSI is held annually at the great USFS Cradle of Forestry facility near Brevard, NC.

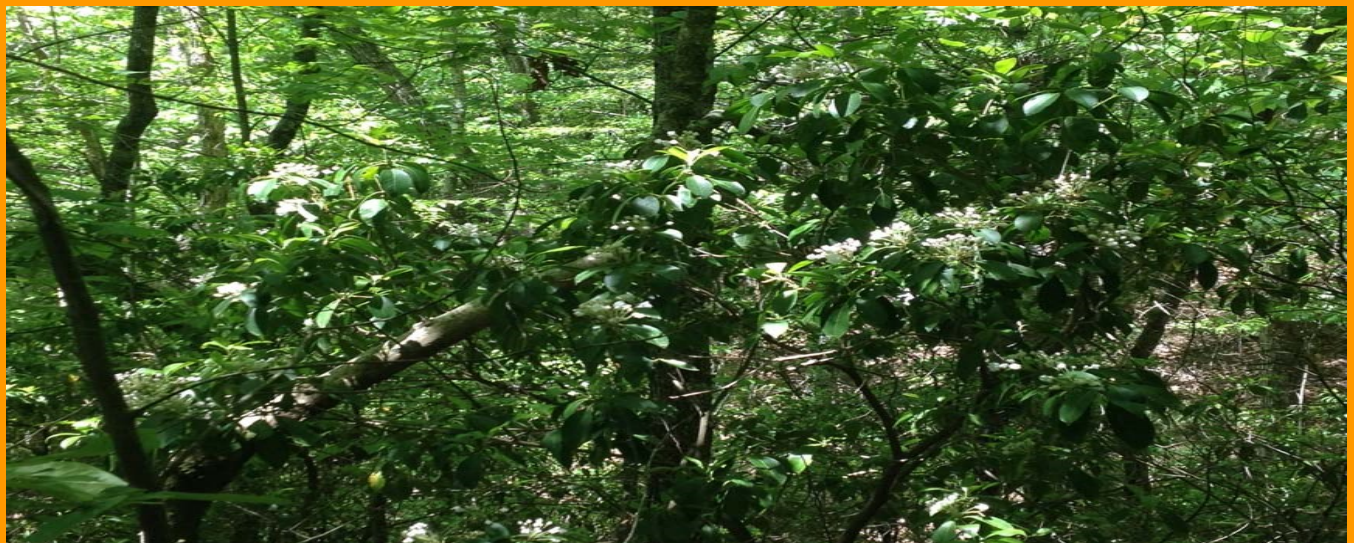
Each year's WSI schedule is announced during January. If you are interested in applying, let next year's BMTA leaders know. I hope some of you evolving BMTA leaders and volunteers will be able to attend future sessions.

Hiking for Health

I received an interesting report from the American Hiking Society report, *Hiking Trails in America: Pathways to Health*. It emphasizes the health benefits of exercise and outdoor activity for people with a variety of health conditions including: diabetes, heart disease, mental health and arthritis. Take a look and consider sharing it with your family and friends or with any health issue oriented organizations with which you may be affiliated.

BMT on WBT radio

Wayne Johnson recently completed hiking the BMT. He was interviewed about his experiences on the BMT by WBT radio for Carolina Outdoors. The show will be broadcast at 5:30am Saturday (6-25-16), probably before you see this newsletter, but you can still listen to the podcast at: <http://feeds.wbt.com/CarolinaOutdoorsPodcast?format=xml>.



BMTA Annual Meeting: Save the Dates! November 4-6 at Historic Tapoco Lodge Plan your weekend getaway NOW!

by Tom Keene



This year's BMTA annual meeting will at the Historic Tapoco Lodge near Robbinsville, North Carolina -- and of course hard by the Smokies. Over the last couple of years the reroutes of the BMT have made this beautiful lodge among our nearest neighbors. In fact, as many of you know, the BMT now runs right through the grounds of the lodge.

These days a north-bound BMT thru-hiker can take a right turn at the lodge and in thirty steps be seated on the patio of the Tapoco River Grill, consuming a craft beer and a made-to-order pizza! Or our hiker could stop at the reception desk (like George Owen below) to check in to one of the lodge's homey, comfortable rooms, either in the lodge itself or in one of its twenty nearby cabins.

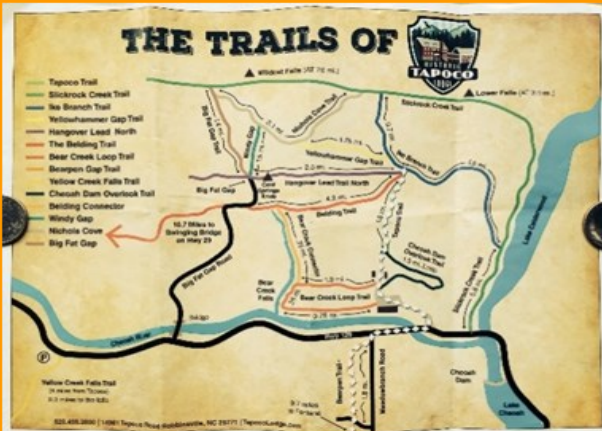


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Intense Planning: As you can also see here our hardworking Annual Meeting Planning Committee has inspected the lodge's key facilities with the greatest care to assure you will be well provided for!



Trails, Trails, Trails: As important as the lodge itself, is its spectacular setting and the wide array of nearby trails of all lengths and degrees of difficulty. The trail map and sign below include only a few of the available trails. Here are a couple of shots taken during our 20 minute walk to the spectacular Yellow Creek Falls.



Local History: The Tapoco Lodge has an interesting history. Among other notable tales, the lodge's basement, now the site of the Tapoco River Grill, was fitted out as a government bomb shelter during WWII because U.S. intelligence felt the nearby Fontana Dam would be a prime target for the Luftwaffe! We will hear more about local Graham County history from our featured speaker Saturday evening, Marshall McClung, Forest Service retiree, a noted local historian and after dinner speaker.

Make a Weekend of It!: For our members living in metro Atlanta, the Tapoco Lodge is a bit of a drive, about 165 miles. Our solution – make this year's annual meeting a real weekend getaway. Save the date, and start planning now!

A Weekend of Activities: To accommodate weekenders we will have hikes of various lengths and difficulty beginning Friday after lunch, during the day Saturday, and again Sunday morning. Friday evening will see an informal social evening in the Tapoco River Grill and, for those who wish, a feature film in the lodge's Tin Can Theatre. Saturday evening brings the annual meeting and banquet in the lodge's Jasper Event Space. It should be an eventful and enjoyable weekend!

Lodging Reservations: Lodging reservations and payment must be made **directly** with the Tapoco Lodge or other location. **Be sure ask for the BMTA meeting rate.**

Meeting Registration/Payment for Saturday Dinner: Meeting registration and payment for the dinner (\$25 per person) will be available on line via the BMTA website, or by mail. Keep an eye out for details in the BMTA newsletter and on the BMTA website homepage.

The Information (and links) You Need:

- **The Website:** The Tapoco Lodge has a superb website, plenty of great visuals and loads of information on rooms, facilities, local resources and attractions. Check it out: <http://tapocolodge.com/>
- **Annual Meeting Discount Prices at Tapoco Lodge:** Lodge or cabin rooms regularly start at \$119 per night, as shown on the website. Prices start at \$99 with the Annual Meeting Weekend discount. **Be sure to ask for BMTA meeting rates when you call to reserve a room**
- **Cabin Notes:** The cabins are only 50 to 100 yards away from the lodge. Cabins typically have two or three separate rooms, rented separately. Each room has its own full bath, most have their own front porch, or at least share a porch with an adjacent room. Rooms sleep from 2 to 5. There is a cabin-by-cabin description on the website – with photos.



- **Camping Options:** Most campsites close at the end of October, but two nearby sites will be open year round:

Calderwood Campground (about a mile north of the lodge – i.e., walking distance – on US129 on Lake Calderwood). The campground is mainly intended for RVs but has plenty of space, porta potties and picnic tables.



Calderwood Campground

NSF'S Horse Cove Campground (near the entrance to Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest; 12.7 miles and 23 minutes from the lodge).



Horse Cove Campground

NOTA BENE: Both of these sites are first come, first served (i.e. no reservations). The only amenities are a privy or porta potty. Neither will have drinking water after October 31. So BYO or filter – though you could fill water containers at the lodge easily for Calderwood.

- **Other lodging options:** The **Phillips Motel** and the **Microtel Inn and Suites** both in Robbinsville, NC (15 miles and 21 minutes) have rooms starting about \$65.

It should be fun! Plan on being there – and make your reservations NOW!

Questions?: email Tom Keene <tkbmta AT gmail.com >

Bob Bald Hike - June 1, 2016

by Rick Harris

Ten folks turned up for the hike to Bob Bald along the BMT from Beech Gap. The hike was a joint BMTA and Cherokee Hiking Club hike. We all met at the Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center and carpoled to the Unicoi Crest Overlook on the Skyway. We hiked from the Overlook to Beech Gap, then followed the BMT to Cold Springs Gap, then climbed the 900 feet to the bald. The trail was in excellent shape, thanks to BMT section maintainer Larry Van Dyke. When we arrived at Bob Bald, storm clouds were forming and thunder could be heard in the distance. Thus we ate a quick lunch, then headed back down the mountain. Round trip distance was about 8 miles. Once we all returned to our cars, we then returned to Tellico Plains and ate dinner at the Tellicafe. It was a great day in the mountains at elevations above 5000 feet.





Those on the hike were Rick and Brenda Harris (hike leaders), Elizabeth Weikert, Michael Friedman, Sandra Fenton, Bob Brown, Howard Baggett, Christy Collins, Ken Cissna, and HP Boudet.

TOCCOA RIVER BRIDGE Hike Section 2

Photos and article courtesy of Clayton Webster & Ken Cissna

May 28, 2016 hikers from the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Over-the-Hill Hikers, and the Sierra Club joined together for a 7.2 mile out and back to the famous suspension bridge over the Toccoa River. Some of this trail is shared by the Benton MacKaye Trail and the Duncan Ridge Trail. Beginning at Hwy 60 the trail goes up about a mile before roller coasting along a ridge line culminating with a mile descent to the river.



Howard Baggett, Ken Cissna & Clayton Webster

Jointly organized by Lee Graham of the Sierra Club and Ken Cissna, the hike was led by Ken with Bob Brown as sweep. Several people on the hike were members of two of the organizations represented, but Ken was the only person who is in all three groups.

The Toccoa River Bridge is an engineering marvel! At 270 feet in length, it is one of the longest in the country. It also stands about 30 feet above the swift moving Toccoa River. It was built in 1977 and solved a near impossible river crossing for hikers and back packers.



High above the rapids in the swift moving Toccoa River are eleven of our 12 hikers. You can get an idea of what the bridge construction is like by seeing all the cables that go to giant poles that anchor the bridge.

Continued next page

As you can imagine, on the weekends the bridge is a very popular place. There is also easier access than hiking six miles. A Forest Service Road that begins where the trailhead is ends within .2 mile of the bridge. On the other side of the bridge another road accesses from a fish hatchery. Upstream, at the Blue Hole is a popular canoe launch. There are also numerous campsites at the bridge. A Boy Scout troop was breaking camp as we arrived. A kayaker wiped out under the bridge while we watched. Several people were fishing in the clear, cold river. On previous week day OHHG hikes on this trail, we hardly saw another person.

We crossed the bridge and found a nice place with some downed trees to eat our lunch, complete with a view of the fast moving river. Lots of Mountain Laurel were in full bloom along the river bank. When we got off the bridge, we felt like drunken sailors. The bridge swings you side to side instead of up and down like the old time swinging bridges some of us are familiar with.



Lunch with a view! Enjoying lunch while watching the river roll by.

The Sierra Club members were impressed with the great condition of the Benton MacKaye Trail. Ken explained about the trail section leaders and the monthly work trips that keep the trail in tip top shape. Even though much of the BMT is far more remote than the Appalachian Trail, the BMTA usually has blow downs, wash outs, etc. all cleared out quickly.

On our way in we saw a woman with several dogs not on a leash. As we started back up the hill on our return trip, we saw her again. One of her dogs had run off quite a ways back. She was asking us to be on the lookout for the missing dog. Even though dogs are permitted on this trail, they are supposed to be on a leash. The rule is to protect the dog and the wildlife it might endanger.



It was a beautiful day for a hike in the North Georgia forest. Everyone was having a great time!

Smell Better! Look Better! New BMT Shirt Benefits the Trail

by Marge Heller

Please check out these great new Benton MacKaye Trail shirts available at Terra Outfitters, in Blue Ridge, GA or available on-line at: <http://terra.atayne.com/> Atayne

The performance tops are made from a lightweight 100% recycled polyester micro mesh fabric that wicks moisture and dries quickly. The photographs are real pictures of the Benton MacKaye Trail in Blue Ridge! Three scenic designs and one solid green, with logo, are available in men and women's sizes including sleeveless, short sleeves and long sleeves.

Proceeds benefit the BMTA to continue trail conservation efforts thanks to the generosity of Corporate Member, Terra Outfitters, and the manufacturer, Atayne. Stop by Terra Outfitters to order yours or shop online and support your trail today!



Frank and Joy Forehand modelling for the BMTA!!! Looking GREAT!!!

Work Trip Report for June, 2016

by Barry Allen

Saturday morning, June 11, was already hot by the time we left Big Mommas and headed for Fall Branch Falls. We all knew this day would be a tough day on the trail, so we changed plans quickly. A group of six summer employees of the Forest Service had been made available in July, so rather than expend all of our energy hauling 6x6's up to the Falls, we decided to spend the day working to improve the trail up to the Falls. There was a bit of digging to clean up and quite a few roots still to remove along the new path.

Armed with trail hoes, Pulaskis and McClouds, Tom Keene, Bob Ruby, Ken Cissna, Mike Kovitch, Jack Kennedy and Frank Forehand began a warm day of trail work on section 6. This group spread out and began improvement of the trail in a half dozen places close to the Fall Branch Falls end. Ralph Heller grabbed the new reciprocating saw and began the difficult task of root removal. The sweat did not stop pouring from any of us until the end of the day some five hours later.



Ralph kept the reciprocating saw running until about noon when the last of the battery power ebbed away after having removed the worst of the roots. The rest of our band of trail brothers worked steadily, digging along the last quarter of the re-route until noon came upon us and with it a sudden urge to sit and relax as the temperature pushed its way into the upper 80's.



By 2:00 or 2:30, after a five hour shift of steady digging – we were ready to call it a day. The trail was in much better shape, and so were we for that matter. Nothing like a day of digging to work away some of the flab accumulated during the month! Thanks to our great group for putting in some hours on a hot June day at Fall Branch Falls. A special thanks also to George Owen for saving a seat for us at the Pink Pig later in the day. You can always count on George for the really tough job!



I look forward to seeing you all next month as we work Section 7 in July. Tom Keene and Ken Cissna will ably lead the work on this day and will have a number of jobs that need to get accomplished. Please check the calendar for details. Thank you!

Georgia Work Trip - July 9

by Tom Keene

If it's July it must be Section 7!

The July work trip will focus in refreshing water diversions in Section 7c (the Sisson Shelter to Boardtown Road). We will have plenty of digging – happily most of it cleaning & restoring rather than new digging, and virtually all of it in the shade.

KEY DETAILS

Trip Leaders: Tom Keene (tkbmta AT gmail DOT com; 770-548-4935) and Ken Cissna.

8:00AM Breakfast meetings (two meeting places; see below) We are sorry to report that Big Momma's in Cherry Log, the logical breakfast place for this trip, is permanently closed. We will therefore have 8:00 AM breakfast meetings at **two locations** so folks don't have to drive out of the way to enjoy a group breakfast:

- **Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge**—this is convenient for those coming from Blue Ridge and points north
- **Hardees in East Ellijay**, 1208 Industrial Blvd, East Ellijay, GA 30540—Best for those coming from Atlanta and other points south

8:45AM: Meet at the BMTA World Headquarters (WHQ), at the Sisson Company, 344 Appalachian Hwy, Blue Ridge, GA 30513. *PLEASE USE THE LOWER LEVEL PARKING AREA AT SISSONS TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE.* From the WHQ we will split into two or more workgroups and carpool to the trailheads.

What to wear, bring, etc.:

General guidelines on what to expect on a BMTA work trip, what to wear, what to bring see [HERE](#). Seasonal health/safety issues for the July, 2016 trip: Heat and humidity, poison ivy, and chiggers. Be SURE to bring plenty of water (two liters recommended), wear long pants and socks long enough to tuck the pants into, plus insect repellent.

See You Then!!

Just in Case...Fridge Form

by Tom Keene

The Safe Return “Fridge Form” is now available for BMTA Maintainers. Going out into the woods alone is not advisable. Stuff happens. And the **BMTA does NOT advise doing it.**

But the reality is many of us do go out alone – and, truth be told, rather enjoy the solitude and self-sufficiency. We are OK with the risk. But what about the partners, family, and friends who grow anxious when we are a bit late coming home?

What **EXACTLY** are they to do if the hour grows genuinely late and we still have not appeared?

The **BMTA Trail Worker Safe Return Info Sheet (aka, the Fridge Form)** is designed to help at least a little. You can download the form [HERE](#). Take a look and print out as many copies as you like. We have also posted the form on page 17 that follows this article.

As you can see the Fridge Form is a simple information sheet, designed to be posted on the refrigerator door on your departure. It provides your loved one with a straightforward list of steps to follow if you are late returning and exactly the information they will need if she/he needs to call in help on your behalf. It also provides simple, clear instructions on whom to call and when.

Again, **the BMTA does NOT encourage solo maintenance trips**; far better to recruit a partner for your maintenance trip. But if you sometimes go out alone, everyone will feel better if you leave the Safe Return Info Sheet, properly filled out, on the fridge before you head out the door.



BMTA TRAIL WORKER SAFE RETURN INFO SHEET

Date: _____ Expected Return Time: ____:_____
Time to Begin Safe Return Procedure: ____:_____

TRAILWORKER CONTACT INFO

-- (Name) (Cell Phone #) (Home Phone #)

VEHICLE ID

(Make) / (Model) / (Color) / (License plate: State & Number)

PARKING LOCATION INFO

Trailhead Name / County / Trailhead Location Described

WORKSITE LOCATION ON TRAIL

Section # & letter / Location description: between _____ & _____

SAFE RETURN PROCEDURE

Begin steps below if trail-worker has not returned by the second time indicated above.

- Call trail worker cell # and home # if relevant. If no answer wait try again every 15 minutes for 1 hour.
- If still no answer, call 911. Be prepared to share the information above with the 911 operator.
- Request emergency respondent proceed to trailhead to see if vehicle is still there. If so, ask to proceed to check trail worksite.
- While awaiting trailhead check, continue trying cell # every 10-15 minutes.
- If respondents need more information about the trailhead or worksite provide them with the cell # of the relevant Maintenance Director or backup person provided below. Also, call this person yourself to report the situation.

Georgia Maintenance Director:

Barry Allen – (770) 294-7384
Georgia Back-up: Tom Keene – (770) 548-4935

BMTA President (Last resort)

Bob Ruby— (404) 202-5778

Tennessee/North Carolina Director:

Ken Jones – (423) 506-8128

Tennessee Back-up:

Rick Harris – (513) 260-1184

North Carolina back-up

Dick Evans – (828) 479-3377

July Hikes

by Mike Pilvinsky Hiking Director

- ◆ **July 14-Flat Creek Loop:** This shaded, moderate hike is part of the Aska Adventure Area off Aska Road just two miles outside of Blue Ridge, GA. Hike on a moderate 6.2 mile hike and bike trail. Bring plenty of water and a snack. Contact hike leader Ken Cissna (kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741)
- ◆ **July 30-Section 9:** BMT, Section 9 with a side trip to Shadow Falls. This is an easy 4.5 mile hike beginning at Dyer Gap and traveling along the South Jacks River with a side trip on the South Fork Trail to Shadow Falls and back, terminating at FS Road 64. Contact hike leader Larry Dumas (ledumas AT Hotmail.com) for meet up time and location.

* 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 July Newsletter is Wednesday July 27, 2016
Thanks for your support!!!!**