



## Points of Interest

Go directly to the page by clicking on the title.

[President's Column](#)

[We Need You](#)

[Trout Fest](#)

[Trail Kickoff](#)

[Old Copper Road](#)

[Remembering Ginny Slack](#)

[Double Spring Gap Work](#)

[Wallalah Mtn Work](#)

[Bald River Hike](#)

[GA April Work Trip](#)

[Thoughts](#)

[Upcoming Hikes/Events](#)

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**BMTA Headquarters**



# Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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MARCH 2016

## President's Column March 2016 by Bob Ruby

### Enjoy Spring on the BMT!

I am writing this column on March 20, the first day of spring. I want to encourage you all to enjoy the trail during this "sweet season of delight," as it was described in Elizabeth Bentley's poem *Ode to Spring*. From now until summer arrives in late June, we can expect the best hiking and camping weather of the year:

- Temperatures are generally mild. This means lighter gear, but dress in layers and be prepared for frontal changes.
- Spring showers bring peak flows over waterfalls. They also make water resupply reliable in springs and creeks along the trail.
- Spring brings an explosion of wildflowers. Peaking in late April and May, this spectacular display changes day-by-day, as well as with elevation.
- In early spring, no leaves on the trees mean great views. Later, sprouting new leaves bring fresh green foliage.
- Minimal brush and briars make hiking pleasant and provide excellent opportunities to see birds and animals along the trail.
- Insect activity is minimal. Mosquitoes, ticks, yellow jackets, etc. are mostly dormant until summer.
- Spring brings a number of local events in towns along and near the trail, like the Smokies Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage on April 19-23.

I encourage you all to make plans to get out to enjoy the trail this spring, whether as a day, section, thru-hiker or as a maintainer. Join one of our BMTA fun hikes that Mike Pilvinsky has arranged or go on your own hike. Take someone along for safety. Share the experience with a child, family member or friend – for both their benefit and yours.

## Spring Break Crowds on the BMT

I have had reports from Joy Forehand (BMTA) and Ardrianna McLane (Chattahoochee River NRA) that they recently encountered lots of young hikers on the BMT near the suspension bridge over the Toccoa River. Apparently the BMT and the 55-mile Georgia Loop formed by the BMT, AT and DRT have become a popular spring break backpack for college students.

Meanwhile reports from thru-hikers indicate continued light usage on the TN/NC sections of the BMT. While the increased visibility for the BMT is good, it would be better if the trail use was more spread out. (Just imagine the impact of large numbers of campers beside the river by the suspension bridge.)

Whenever possible we should encourage BMT hikers to also experience the middle and northern sections of the Trail. Because of the great TN/NC terrain, numerous streams and scenic balds, as well as its backcountry solitude, I always mention that I like this middle section of the BMT even better than the GA sections. If they are looking for loop hikes, there are several great options in the Cohutta and Big Frog Wildernesses, the Bald River Gorge Wilderness, Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area, the Joyce-Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness and in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

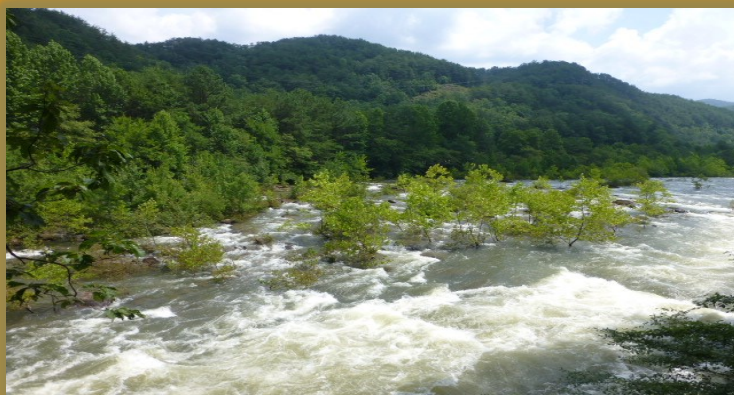
## Membership Renewals

If you haven't yet renewed your BMTA membership for 2016, please do so now. We have reached the time when we lapse those who haven't renewed for the new year. Because Ken Cissna, BMTA Membership Director, has been busy moving to his new home, you have not yet been lapsed, but I expect this will be done in the next few weeks. We hate to lose anyone. Fortunately BMTA membership has been growing steadily and continues to reach new highs each year. Thanks for your support!

As you know, memberships in BMTA are for an entire calendar year, so **everyone's membership ended on December 31**. You can pay via PayPal using your credit card or send a check to the BMTA. Either way, you start by clicking here: <http://www.bmta.org/Membership.php>

Your membership is tax deductible. Also, please consider adding a tax deductible donation to BMTA. As you know, BMTA has no paid staff, and all donations go to support the trail. Donations via check may be made using the printed membership form. Donations via credit card or PayPal can be made by clicking the "Donate" button located at the bottom left of the [bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org) home page. **Thanks for your support!**

**Membership Counts!** Members are given first consideration in the event a hike overfills. Membership also clarifies your status as a covered trail maintainer for the Worker's Comp provided under our Group Volunteer Agreement with the Forest Service.



## We Need You!!!!!!

By Marcia Lehman

This is going to be an exciting year for BMTA! There will be many opportunities for our members to help us promote BMTA and hiking in general at many events scheduled throughout 2016. Last fall, a professional event tent was purchased by BMTA. This new tent is attracting many more people to our display at the events in which we have participated. As in previous years, we will be selling BMTA merchandise at several events.

The schedule of events:

Event	Location	Date
Troutfest	Blue Ridge	Apr. 30
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	May 28-29
4th of July Parade	Blue Ridge	July 2
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	Oct. 8-9
Apple Festival	Ellijay	Oct. 15-16

You don't have to be an expert on BMTA or hiking. You only have to greet people and show your enthusiasm for hiking in order to man the tent during the event. AND, in the case of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, you just need to march in the parade. So, if you have a couple of hours to spare on any of these dates, please contact Marcia Lehman, Co-Chair BMTA Publicity at [mlehman10 AT Yahoo.com](mailto:mlehman10@Yahoo.com) or 404-229-6058.



# Visit BMTA Booth at Trout Fest

By Marge Heller & Marcia Lehman

BMTA will have a display tent in the Breakout Marketplace, Saturday, April 30. Come see us!



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[BlueRidgeTroutFest.com](http://BlueRidgeTroutFest.com)

# BMTA at Appalachian Trail Kick Off 2016

By Marge Heller & Marcia Lehman, BMTA Publicity Co-Chairs



The BMTA participated in the 2016 AT Kickoff Event held March 5 and 6 at Amicalola Falls. The BMTA booth featured the many attributes of the BMT. Many thanks to the following BMTA members who volunteered their time: President Bob Ruby, Board members, Ken Cissna and Larry Dumas, and BMTA member Ralph Heller.

# OLD COPPER ROAD TRAIL HIKE

By Mike Pilvinsky Photos courtesy of Martha Fowler

The first hike of the month found us tracing the Old Copper Road along the Ocoee River past the Whitewater Center and down the Rhododendron Trail to Thunder Rock Campground for a total of 5.9 miles. Our trek along the magnificent thundering rapids of the 1996 Olympics was complimented by an absolutely perfect spring day. Long time BMTA member and Appalachian Trail Thru-Hiker Hank Baudet led eight hikers on a leisurely stroll downstream which was accompanied by lots of laughter and smiling faces. Hank is quite the story teller. He really keeps his audience entertained, and we were no exception. He could make you laugh while climbing Big Frog Mountain with a full pack on your back! Hikers included Mike Pilvinsky, Howard Baggett, Barb Medford, Ann Miller, Paul McCord, Victoria Toms, Martha Fowler and Hank Baudet.



Views of the river were stunning!!



## Beginner Backpacking to Carter's Lake

By Mike Pilvinsky



On Friday March 18, three BMTA members and one guest participated in our first ever beginner backpacking trip. Although only one was a novice the other three used the occasion to check their gear and Ultralite backpacking techniques before the beginning of the warm weather backpacking season. We were blessed with beautiful weather on Friday and although rain threatened on Saturday, we kept dry on the short trek back to the trailhead.

**Tom Sewell and Ken Cissna solve all the problems of the world along the shore of Carters Lake.**



**Ken Cissna, Stephen Fields, and Tom Sewell, enjoying the early evening at their campsite.**

## Remembering Lifetime BMTA Member Ginny Slack

By Darcy Douglas

We have lost yet another long-time member of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. Ginny Slack could always be counted on to volunteer for tasks others might not wish to do, such as sitting with the display to inform others about the trail. She did her share of construction and maintenance, too. One funny story many of us will remember was the day she was late for the work trip, but along about lunch time trudged up the hill from Dial Road to meet us at Brawley Mountain Fire Tower. That is quite a trudge with tools. She had tools, a pack, AND a very large cake from Publix with an even larger kitchen knife that was needed to cut and share her birthday cake!!! She had been in rather ill health the last few years, and passed away Sunday, March 13, 2016. Her passing leaves an empty place in the hearts of many in the GATC and BMTA. She was faithful to the end!! We will miss you Ginny.



## BMTA First Backpacking Clinic

By Mike Pilvinsky

On Friday, March 11, the first ever BMTA backpacking clinic was conducted by AT section hiker and BMTA Corporate Sponsors, Travis and Shirley Crouch at the North Georgia Mountain Outfitters store, located just four-miles north of Ellijay on highway 515. Eight hikers attended the program which was outstanding by any measure. Travis and Shirley shared their wealth of knowledge gained from decades of long distance hiking and travel. From beginners to experienced hikers, everyone learned something that night. I can't say enough. It was simply a terrific program. Afterward, when I got in my car, I noticed it had been three hours since I entered their store. I couldn't believe the time had passed so quickly. Not one boring moment during the evening. Thanks to our BMTA friends, Travis and Shirley!



## Work Trip Report Sections 11a and 11b

By Steve Davis



All smiles!!!

I made a maintenance trip to sections 11a and 11b last week. This part of the BMT starts at Double Spring Gap at the Georgia/Tennessee line and goes north past the summit of Big Frog Mountain. The weather was quite warm with lots of sunshine and clear skies. As I was hiking up the mountain, I encountered a group of 10 or 12 college students who were on spring break from Iowa State University. There are no mountains in Iowa so they came to the BMT to enjoy the beauty of nature. They had started at Jacks River and were making a loop hike on the BMT for several days. What a nice group of kids!



The view from Big Frog Mountain

# March Work Trip Georgia Section 3a Wallalah Mountain

By Philip Guhl

There was a cloud hanging over the day before we got started. Not because rain and potential storms were forecasted for the early afternoon, but because Barry “The Machine” Allen was out ill. As far back as I can remember, this is the first work trip he has missed in two months of Sundays!

Despite Barry being out, a large group gathered at The Village restaurant in Blue Ridge before heading out to the Section 3a trailhead at Highway 60. When we arrived, Barry Allen was onsite. He presented a rundown on the work he needed done on this section. After I covered the Job Hazard Analysis and Safety Debriefing the crew split into two: Bob Cowdrick headed up the “Rock Hawlers.” They were tasked with building rock steps at the switchback just before the rock outcrop near the top of Wallalah Mountain as well as putting in rock steps/walkway through a couple of big seeps a few yards before the switchback. George Owens led the “Ditch Diggers” who were tasked with installing and cleaning out water diversions on the trail leading up to Wallalah proper. Quietly...Barry slipped away to work on healing up.

Bob’s stalwart “Rock Hawlers” consisted of Don Kenny, Sean Blanton, Ed Sullivan, and Brian Trinkle. George and his formidable “Ditch Diggers” included Darcy Douglas, Mike Kovitch, Larry Dumas, Pete Coleman, Jack Kennedy, Frank Forehand, Ralph Heller, Curt Vought, and Ken Cissna.

Tom Keene and Doug Kleiber began the day by finishing up some water diversion on Section 6b near Fall Branch Falls. They joined the crew on Wallalah a little before noon.

Everyone was extremely productive. Although rain was forecasted...not a drop fell. None of the crew fell, either! Twenty-five water diversions were either installed or cleaned out. Approximately one-eighth-mile of vegetation was cleared. About 60 yards of side hilling was done to improve the tread. Parts of the old roadbed were re-blocked with trees, branches, and other material to encourage hikers to turn right and stay on the trail. Adding to this was the clearing of several small trees around the lookout at the rock outcrop near the top. Due to the time, energy level, and work completed thus far, the crew did not work above the vista.

The crew started up the trail at 9:00 AM and wrapped up at 3:00 PM. It was a full work day with a climb that merits bragging rights! I want to thank everyone that participated and made it such a fun trip on a beautiful day.

The only regret I have is...I forgot to take any pictures of the gang...I will work on this in the future!

### The Crew:

Sean Blanton, Ken Cissna, Pete Coleman, Bob Cowdrick, Darcy Douglas, Larry Dumas, Frank Forehand, Philip Guhl, Ralph Heller, Tom Keene, Jack Kennedy, Don Kenny, Doug Kleiber, Mike Kovitch, George Owen, Ed Sullivan, Brian Twinkle and Curt Vought

**THANK YOU!!!!!!**

## Bald River Hike

by Rick Harris



Nine members of the BMTA drove up to the Tellico Plains area in SE Tennessee to hike the Bald River Trail in the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest. This nine-mile hike parallels the Bald River from the Bald River Falls through the Bald River Gorge Wilderness, passing numerous other waterfalls along the way. The weather was perfect: crystal clear skies with temps in the 60s. Those who stayed at home missed a great trip.

Trip leader Rick Harris, who lives in Tellico Plains, gave the group much of the history of the area from the logging days to the present. This area was heavily logged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A narrow gauge railroad track with Shay locomotives carried logs out of this area down to Tellico Plains to the mill. Much of the trail follows the old railroad bed. The engineering involved in creating the railbed is pretty awesome. Because the valley walls were so steep, much of the track was actually in the river bed. A trestle crossed the Bald River just above the falls along Tellico River Road.

After the USFS bought the land, the area was replanted and now the trees there are almost 100 years old. The area is protected forever as designated Wilderness. The upper Bald River drainage through which the BMT courses is also currently protected as the Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area and hopefully one day will also become federally designated Wilderness.



We all ate a late lunch on the rocks below a waterfall 4.5 miles up the trail, then returned the way we came in.





Are the smiles in anticipation of Zango?!



Zango!!!

Once we returned to the trailhead, all but one of us ate a great dinner at the Tellicafe in Tellico Plains. If you ever visit Tellico Plains and are looking for an awesome supper, check out the Tellicafe. We finished off dinner with their Zango dessert, a specialty of the restaurant.

Hikers included Rick Harris (trip leader), Mike Pilvinsky, Tom Sewell, Hank Baudet, Bob Brown, Ken Cissna, Clare Sullivan, Ed Sullivan, and Howard Baggett.

## BMTA APRIL WORK TRIP

### Section 4, Payne Gap to GA 60 at Wilscot Gap

By Barry Allen

- ⇒ **Where:** Section 4
- ⇒ **When:** Saturday, April 9, 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:** Brush removal and blazing at water sources; removal of discarded appliances.
- ⇒ **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 or **Tom Keene** at 770-548-4935

Please join us for our April work trip as we work Section 4. Our plan is to run split crews with the first crew responsible for clearing and blazing water access into two locations while hiking from Payne to Wilscot. The second crew will work from Wilscot to drag out several appliances dumped below the trail in years past. We'll rope these old appliances up to the trail, load them on wagons, haul them to Wilscot (about ½ mile) and take them to a scrap metal yard. We also will work to brush off some side paths that cause confusion on this section of trail.

**Needs on this trip:** We need two good saw men on this trip. The water sources are heavily cluttered with deadfall, so we need to cut and blaze a good, safe path to our water. Also, we'll need to cut deadfall out of the way to drag appliances up to the trail. We could also use more rope to help drag these appliances.

**Tom Keene and Larry Dumas** will serve as our leader/co-leader for this trip, so please join us in April – a beautiful month to be on the trail! Thank you!

## Hike in a Memorial Day Parade

Did you miss out on being in a parade in High School or College? Regardless of your answer, here is your chance to become part of a parade on Memorial Day, May 28, 2016 and show off your hiking skill. 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)

## Thoughts from the Trail

By Mike Pilvinsky

We are now well into the hiking season with more great weather days than we have seen since early fall '15. Although there were plenty of hiking opportunities this past winter, most of us found a reason to stay warm or dry, more than once, in the past couple of months. So that brings up an interesting question. "Just how do you stay motivated to hike even when our bodies or something else is telling us not to hike?" One of the things I do to keep my motivation up for hiking as well as some other pursuits (like losing weight, getting in shape, etc.) is to listen to podcasts.

For those who are not familiar with the term, a podcast is like a radio program without commercials. You can usually listen to a podcast for its entire length without any significant interruptions. There are podcasts on virtually any subject you can think of. Three of my favorites are: *The First 40 Miles*, *Sounds of the Trail*, and *Dirtbag Diaries*. The one that resonates the most with me is *The First 40 Miles*. It is hosted by a young husband and wife and includes thoughtful insights into every element of backpacking from gear reviews to the more cerebral aspects of hiking. Although these podcasts tend to focus on camping and backpacking rather than day-hiking, the principals, equipment, and mental outlook are virtually the same for each activity. I listen to someone else's experiences and I am energized to go out and do it on my own. Listen to one and let me know your reaction.

You can subscribe to podcasts for free from iTunes or choose to listen to specific episodes that you select. If you have a smart phone, iPad, tablet, computer or similar device you can listen via Bluetooth or ear buds. I particularly like to listen to my podcasts while walking, or driving. Not only do the podcasts motivate, but they help you focus; they are informative and educational. Try it! Join us next month as we have two fun hikes, one in Ellijay and one near Blue Ridge. On April 23d, Marcia Lehman will lead an easy four-mile hike along the Cartecay River. The next Friday, Joy Forehand will lead a moderate hike from Fall Branch Falls on the BMT to Weaver Creek Road. This is our annual Lady Slipper Hike and you will be in awe of the hundreds of pink Lady Slippers along the way. Sometimes you may even find the extremely rare white Lady Slipper. Please contact Marcia at [mlehman10 AT yahoo.com](mailto:mlehman10@yahoo.com) and Joy at [jwfbrga AT gmail.com](mailto:jwfbrga@gmail.com) for information about their meet-up times and locations.

**Until next time...see you on the trail!**



## April Hikes & Events

### ◆ April 16 Cartecay River Loop Trail:

This easy 4 mile hike along the Cartecay River near Ellijay is a favorite that includes sights of beaver activity and the beauty of the river. Contact **hike leader Marcia Lehman**: mlehman10 AT yahoo.com

### ◆ April 29 Lady Slipper Hike:

Always a highlight, find hundreds of Lady Slippers along this moderate Benton MacKaye Trail section from Fall Branch Falls to Weaver Creek. Flame Azaleas are often see as well on this hike. Late morning start for this hike. Contact hike **leader Joy Forehand**: jwfbgra AT gmail.com

### ◆ April 30 First Annual Trout Fest:

BMTA will have an information booth at the First Annual Trout Fest, 10AM - 5PM, in the Downtown City Park, Blue Ridge, GA.

*\* 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 April Newsletter is Tuesday April 26, 2016  
Thanks for your support!!!!**