



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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Points of Interest

Go directly to the page by clicking on the title.

[President's Column](#)

[National Trails Day](#)

[Boling Park Hike](#)

[TN/NC Work Trip](#)

[Blood Mountain](#)

[Goforth Creek Hike](#)

[Work Trip Section 5](#)

["Leisurely"](#)

[May Work Trip](#)

[Upcoming Hikes](#)

President's Column April 2017 by Tom Keene

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BMTA Headquarters



Work Trip Sunrises

It was about 6:45AM the morning of April 8th when I walked out on the front porch to check the weather for the recent Georgia work trip. This is what greeted me!

The experience reminded me of my earliest BMTA work trips in the mid-90s when I drove up from Kennesaw in the early morning. Many months of the year I began the trip before sunrise and then got to see the day unfurl itself as I rolled up I-575 toward the East Ellijay Waffle King.

It was a great way to start a day in the woods. And still is!

2017 BMTA Annual Meeting – Nov. 3-5. (Save the Dates!)

At our April 22 meeting the BMTA Board of Directors approved VP **Dick Evans'** proposal to hold our 2017 annual meeting at Vogel State Park near Blairsville, Georgia, on November 3-5. Vogel is one of Georgia's oldest and most beloved state parks, with a wonderful array of hiking opportunities nearby – not least that lesser known long-distance trail up Blood Mountain. Please note: because of other bookings at Vogel we will hold our annual business meeting **FRIDAY EVENING**, saving Saturday for a relaxing bonfire social. Stay tuned for more details.

For a preview of a hike up Blood Mountain, see newsletter article on page 8 for Mike Pilvinsky's account of the recent BMTA fun hike to the Blood Mountain summit.

Blaze of the Month

Recently long-time BMTA section maintainer and board stalwart **Ralph Heller** turned his section over to (relative) newcomer **Jeff DePaola**. The two members encountered this blaze when they hiked the section together on March 22 to complete the transfer. That date, I am reliably informed, was also the 16th anniversary of Ralph's major heart surgery. The two hiked seven miles and 20,756 steps.

(But who's counting!)

Hike on, Ralph!

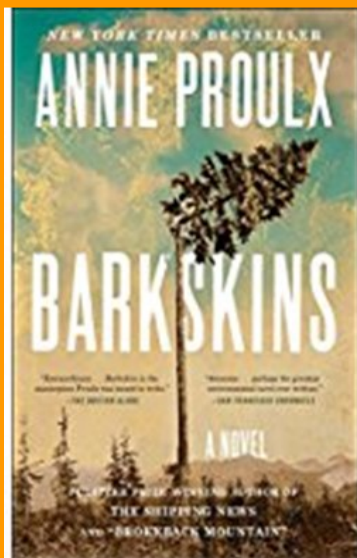


Historic Discovery (in Bob Ruby's Basement)



Bob Ruby recently recovered a small piece of BMTA history in his basement. There in a couple of small boxes, overlooked when he passed the association's store inventory on to **Ken Cissna**, Bob found close to 100 of the BMT "patches" enthusiasts ironed onto backpacks and hiking shirts for the first 15-20 years of our history. The attractive triangular patches are again available, along with the familiar circular disk-with-white-diamond model, via our online store at <http://www.bmta.org/Store-Patches.html>.

Recommended Reading – Annie Proulx, *Barkskins* (2016)



Anybody here like a forest? Then read Annie Proulx's *Barkskins*. In her Pulitzer Prize winning *The Shipping News*, Proulx demonstrated a virtuoso's ability to communicate a sense of place. This story begins among French Canadians and their not so neighborly Native Americans deep in the forests of Labrador. From there we follow logging crews, with all the attendant hardships and hazards, as they both harvest and grieve the loss of forests right across North America. You will smell the pine resin, and hear the axes, the grinding stones, and the roar of the rivers as big logs crash downstream to the mills. A family saga on the surface, this 700 page classic is really about changing attitudes toward the forest from 16th century Native Americans to today's lovers of wilderness.

It's magnificent! And filled with wonderful woodsmen lore as well as first-rate environmental history. Just out in paperback -- from \$12 on Amazon.

Coming Soon!!

National Trails Day Event-June 3 at Vogel State Park

by George Owen

Every year many thousands celebrate National Trails Day on the first Saturday of June as promoted by the American Hiking Society, the hikers' national organization.

This year it is again being celebrated **Saturday, June 3, at Vogel State Park, Pavilion #2** (across from visitor's center) near Blairsville, Georgia. You are invited for a day of activities, fun, and food! **Activities begin at 9:00 a.m.** and include options of a hike, trail work, or a venture on invasive and rare plants. This event is locally / jointly sponsored by the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA), Mountain High Hikers (MHH), and Georgia Forest Watch (GFW).

- ◆ **Family Friendly Hike.** A new approach to the hike this year is an emphasis on it being "family-friendly" featuring an easy hike on the nature trail and parts of two other trails. Parents and grandparents are especially invited to bring their children /grandchildren. Leaders will be Dylan Becker, teen son of park manager Jack Becker, sharing his love of Vogel, and George Owen of BMTA. Families are especially invited to join this 9:00 a.m. hike that will give modest exercise, some education, and fun for the morning hours.

Two other morning events are available (also beginning at 9:00 a.m.) These will last three hours.

- ◆ **Trail work** on a park trail will be led by Lawson Herron of GATC - participants need to bring work gloves and wear sturdy shoes or boots.
- ◆ **Workshop on Invasive and Rare Plants** led by Eric Grave of GATC and Hike Inn executive director

At noon there will be a covered-dish luncheon for all at Pavilion 2. Please remember to bring your covered dish and plan ahead to keep hot or cold food safely contained while you attend your morning venture. Melanie Spamer and Kathy Chastain of GATC and Candy Retter of MHH are in charge of this food event.

After the luncheon there will be a brief program including a welcome by Jack Becker, Vogel State Park Manager, brief remarks by U.S. Forest Service District Ranger Andy Baker and recognition of key sponsoring organizations' leaders. There will be a briefing by Eric Grave of GATC and the Hike Inn on "Trail Plant Inventory." After the meeting GATC prospective members will have an orientation, and all others may enjoy the lake, go hiking, or just visit with hiking friends.

CONTACTS: To register for trail work contact Lawson Herron at lawson144 AT charter.net or 770-993-5231; for family-friendly hiking contact George Owen at gowen2 AT tds.net or 706-374-4716; for conservation contact Eric Graves at ericn Graves AT hotmail.com or 404-693-4453; and for other information contact Joe Boone at booned AT windstream.net or 760-835-2269.

Boling Park Hike

by Howard Baggett

Thirteen BMTA members and four guests enjoyed a nice hike on the best kept secret south of Jasper, Georgia. Darcy Douglas, who has lived nearby for 1 ½ years and never hiked here, was amazed at the wonderful trail system Dan Owen and Boy Scout troop 241 have developed along and above the Etowah River starting at Boling Park in Canton. Below is a picture of a one of a kind pedestrian bridge along with everyone who enjoyed the hike (except for photographer Suzy Downing). Dan and Scout Troop 241 have built numerous bridges along the many trails.



The highlight of the hike was the fact that Dan Owen joined us and gave a history lesson on the development of the trails. He has worked for years with the Corps of Engineers, the city of Canton, Boy Scout troop 241 and others developing and maintaining the trails. Shortly before the hike, I told him about a tree across one of the trails and the next time I hiked that trail, it had been removed by him. He also distributed maps of the trails which he had updated the day before the hike.

We started the hike at the trailhead in Boling Park, hiked the main white trail to the yellow trail and followed it to the purple trail. (The ladies insisted the blaze is lavender!) Then we took the purple trail until it intersected with the orange trail which we took to New Hightower Baptist church where we had lunch. The church was built in 1886 and then rebuilt after it was burned down by vandals in 1997. Many consider the church to be haunted. About 200 yards behind the church and along a creek is a baptismal built with concrete.

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You can see where water was once pumped in from the creek, although there is now a water meter in front of it. It does not look like the baptismal has been used recently, but one of the highlights of the hike was when a few members went down in it for a quick inspection and it looked like Suzy Downing was baptizing Tim Holby when he slipped and she caught him. We had quite a laugh. Some called it a “Satanic Baptismal” due the satanic images painted around it which have now been painted over.

There is a cemetery across the road from the church. One day in November, I was hiking by and a member of the church drove up and told me that a big oak tree by the cemetery was believed to have been the sight of a few hangings. Ironically, the next time I hiked there, the tree had been cut and a very nice wooden cross was mounted on the stump.

After lunch, we hiked the two mile green loop to where it intersected with the white trail and headed back to the trailhead along the Etowah River. Of the 7.6 mile hike, 6 miles was one big loop.

Still Time to Hang Out at the BMTA Tent

By Marcia Lehman

You don't have to be an expert on BMTA or hiking to greet people and show your enthusiasm for hiking to man the tent during our upcoming events at the festivals listed below. The tent will be stocked with numerous BMTA materials, hiking maps and other valuable information for those that stop by. 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 or 404-229-6058.



Event	Location	Date
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	May 27-28
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	October 14-15
Apple Festival	Ellijay	October 21-22

TN/NC March Work Trip

by Ken Jones

For our March 25th work trip, we continued our work on Section 12c (Kimsey Highway Crossing to McFarland Road). On our last work trip in February, we noticed that the tread in spots, as well as all five switchbacks, had deteriorated to the point that they were no longer meeting our standards. So our plan for this trip was to re-work all five switchbacks and properly grade about 500 feet of tread. With the help of our eight volunteers and some really nice spring weather, we accomplished our plan. We also had to clear four trees that came down in the severe storm that occurred on March 21st (we just logged this section out a month ago). We very much appreciate two first time workers that came out for the work trip, Dane McDonald and Jacob Duncan. We hope that they had a good time on the work trip and will join us frequently in the future. It was great to work with Clayton Pannell on the trails again, and a special thanks to Barry Allen for coming so far to help us out.



**Jacob Duncan, Larry Daugherty's 14 year-old Grandson, proudly stands on his completed switchback.
BMTA — leaving footprints for generations to follow.**



Part of our work crew after a hard day's work (L to R)
Clayton Pannell, Dane McDonald, Ken Jones, Larry Daugherty and Jacob Duncan.

We thank the following volunteers for making this another safe and successful work trip: Larry Dougherty, Jacob Duncan, Clayton Pannell, Ridge Sliger, Chloe Bloom, Dane McDonald, Barry Allen and Ken Jones.

Smokies, Smokey Mountains or Smoky Mountains?

You will find various (and sometimes strange) spellings for the Great Smoky Mountains (correct spelling). They are called **Smokies** for short and they are often spelled "**Smokey**" Mountains by those on the western North Carolina side of the mountains. We even occasionally see Smokys and Smokeys and they are often simply abbreviated by the acronym *GSMNP*. We just want you to know the correct spelling. One thing is for sure: We all know why they are called "GREAT".

<http://www.smokymtnmall.com/smokies-smokey-mountains-smoky.shtml>

Byron Reece to Blood Mountain

by Mike Pilvinsky

When we canceled the Blood Mountain Hike a couple of months ago due to serious weather, we made the right decision. Hiking on this part of the AT when the ground is wet and slippery is just not worth the risk — too many chances to turn an ankle or worse. Our patience was rewarded when our alternate date — April 1st! — dawned to near perfect weather and very clear skies. After climbing about 2½ miles from the Byron Reece parking lot to the summit, we could clearly see Stone Mountain to the south and Brasstown Bald to the north. It wasn't quite clear enough to see the Atlanta skyline, but a great view none the less.



On the way the summit, Evelin and Mark pick their way through dozens of hikers enjoying one of the magnificent views.

We got to enjoy these views with hundreds of other hikers, which made me remember why we normally hike on week days. We encountered so many hikers that we frequently found ourselves taking unscheduled rest stops while we let other faster groups pass. More often than not, we would pass that same group a couple of hundred yards up the trail while they rested.

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The Blood Mountain section of the AT is the most traveled section in Georgia and the highest point on the AT in Georgia. People are drawn to it because of the easy access via HWY 19/129 between Blairsville and Dahlonega. The historic nature of the Blood Mountain shelter, nearby Mountain Crossings at Neels Gap and of course the views, make this a unique and memorable day hike. It is certainly not an easy one, but it's very doable for anyone in reasonable shape. If you plan to make this hike, take plenty of water and start hiking by at least 1:00pm.



The hikers took a short side trip to the mysterious balancing rock on the AT.



Mark Pettit, Howard Baggett, Evelin Yarns and Tim Holby in front of the iconic stone shelter at the top of Blood Mountain.



On the downhill half of the hike.

Goforth Creek Hike

by Hank Baudet



On Monday, April 17, Hank Baudet led a BMTA leisure hike on Goforth Creek, which lays in the Cherokee National Forest, near the Ocoee River Gorge — the site of whitewater events during the 1996 Olympics. The trail runs along a beautiful clear stream that bubbles out the side of the Southern Appalachian Mountains and runs through a pristine forest before emptying into the Ocoee.

Hikers met at the Piggly Wiggly in Ducktown, TN, proceeded to the Ocoee Whitewater Center to consolidate cars, and then shuttled to the small parking area at Goforth, where they began the mile and a half to our lunch spot where we ate a leisurely and enjoyable lunch on the large smooth and comfortable rocks.

The hike back to the parking area was again a great experience. The sound of the water tumbling over the rocks was intoxicating, and several hikers commented on the peacefulness of our surroundings and how this hike was one of their very favorites.



Thanks to Lydia for helping everyone with the names of dozens of the wildflowers that we saw along the trail. When the hike was completed, several changed their boots for river shoes and entered the creek adjacent to the trailhead to cool off. A few even went back to the White Water Center and walked to the famous "Blue Hole" where more cool water awaited. Several young people were jumping in and having a joyous time. The rock formations, such as "Swiss Cheese," are a wonder of nature formed hundreds of years before hiking clubs were even thought of. All in all, a wonderful time was had by all. Even the "stories" were appreciated! The hikers were Ken Cissna, Martha Fowler, Tim Holby, Ruth Horn, Lydia Kieft, Barbara Mefford, Ann Miller, Mike Pilvinsky, Lina Prince and hike leader/storyteller, Hank Baudet.



Martha took pictures with her trusty selfie stick!



April Work Trip Report Section 5

by Barry Allen — photos courtesy of Mike Kovich

On this rather cool Saturday morning in April, our work group met for breakfast at the Iron Bridge Café and General Store on Aska Road. We all really enjoyed this new dining experience. The Café is right on our trail, across from Shallowford Bridge. The breakfast menu offers plenty of variety, is well prepared, well served and well priced. (Try the home fries, grilled to perfection with a few onions and green peppers!) Thanks to several members who brought this new eating opportunity to my attention – they must have noticed that I don't miss many meals.



A hearty breakfast was still being served while some members observed a bald eagle looking for his own breakfast above the Toccoa River. After dining, we drove a short distance to the intersection of Shallowford and Old Dial Road where a brief tailgate safety session was presented. A 30-minute shuttle brought our group to the top of Brawley Mountain; it was finally time to begin the hike into Garland Mountain.

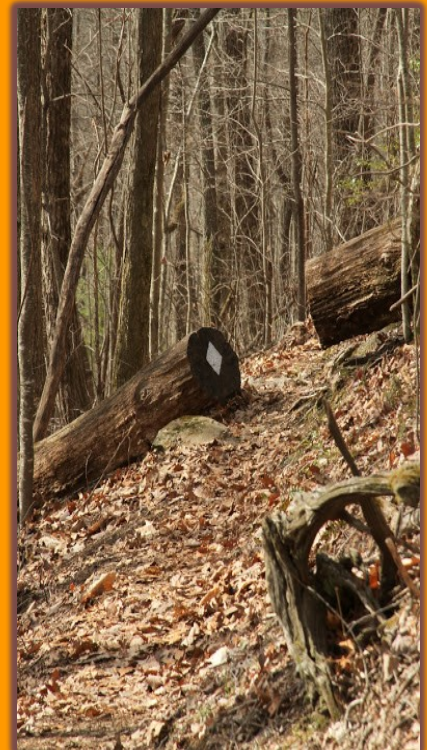


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From Brawley, the hike is downhill to Garland Gap. Views were still un-obstructed by spring growth, so there were plenty of opportunities to glimpse a distant Lake Blue Ridge.



Once at Garland, we spread out and picked up where last month's work had ended. The work was all uphill – along the flank of Garland. At lunch time, we dined while sitting on a large oak tree recently sawed off the trail by Phil and Debra Guhl. After lunch, one more hour of work saw us finish the side-hilling repairs and begin the 1.5 mile hike to the vehicles at Old Dial Road.



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Once again, April volunteer turnout was just what the doctor ordered for the work at hand. The April event at Garland Mountain saw 17 volunteers donating 124 combined hours of their time to finish the repairs first started in March. With 20 volunteers working in March and another 17 working in April, we repaired over ¼ mile of trail, and de-bermed over two miles of trail.

In addition to time spent digging, several volunteers worked hard to install signage at critical access points along the trail. We hope the new signage will discourage some of the horse traffic that has proven difficult for the Forest Service to monitor. **Thanks again to folks who helped work this section of trail.**

NEXT MONTH: please join us on Section 3a as we work to replace log steps located a short distance from GA 60 and Little Skeenah Creek. We'll need all the help we can muster in getting 6x6 pressure treated material to the job site! Hope to see you there.

“Leisurely” Green Mountain Hike

by Hank Baudet with photos courtesy of Martha Fowler

On a bright sunny morning at the Food Lion in Blue Ridge nine hardy souls, all BMTA members, gathered in preparation for the hike on the Green Mountain Trail. This was a new hike for even some of our longtime members. After setting up our shuttle from Deep Gap on Aska Road to Shady Falls Road parking area, we began a leisurely ascent of Green Mountain. Everyone chatted and enjoyed the view as we walked. The views were unobstructed and as we reached the top of the mountain, we were treated to a beautiful view of Blue Ridge Lake below.



After a short rest stop, we begin our descent down the other side of the mountain. We could see the evidence of spring in the new leaf growth and several types of wild flowers in bloom.

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We made our way along the trail to the site of an at least 100 year old homestead where we enjoyed our lunch. The remains of the old foundation and chimney were very interesting to all and Bob Brown made us all envious of his folding chair / backpack. From there we made it back to the parking lot and our cars. The following people enjoyed this day hike: Howard Baggett, Bob Brown, Ken Cissna, Martha Fowler, Ruth Horn Lydia Kieft, Ann Miller, Lina Prince, and hike leader, Hank Baudet.



May Work Trip — Section 3A

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Section 3A
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, May 13, 2017
- ◆ **Meet:** 8:00 at Iron Bridge Cafe and General Store, 8436 Aska Road in Blue Ridge
- ◆ **Plan for the Day: Step Replacement**
- ◆ **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 the group for the May work event on Section 3A, just north of GA 60 at Little Skeenah Creek. The challenge for the day is to replace approximately 20 steps located 0.2 mile north of GA 60. The hard work will be hauling 6x6 pressure treated material to the job site in four person mule teams. We need **early** help to haul material -- so if you have afternoon plans, then join us for a couple of hours and feel free to leave and take care of your other chores.

Meet for breakfast at 8:00 at the Iron Bridge Café on Aska Road across from the Shallowford Bridge or at 9:00 at GA 60 and Little Skeenah Creek parking area.



Upcoming Hikes

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules a minimum of two hikes per month, one of five to eight miles and moderate difficulty, and one that is shorter and easier. In addition, we have occasional backpacking hikes and more difficult ones that might be called "hardy hikes." Occasionally we co-sponsor hikes with other organizations. Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

If you are interested in leading a hike or have a hike you'd like to see us offer with someone else leading, please contact me at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next two months are listed below. More will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month's newsletter for updates.

May

May 3rd (Wednesday) Lady Slipper Hike – BMT from Fall Branch Falls to Weaver Creek (Sections 6b, 6c, and 6d)

This hike is a moderate to strenuous 6.2 miles. After hiking less than a half mile we will pause at the ever-popular Fall Branch Falls. As we approach our lunch stop at the top of Rocky Mountain, we will find loads of trillium lining the trail. The last section of the hike takes us past several lady slipper gardens, some filled with hundreds of the beautiful pink orchid. Wild azaleas should be in bloom as well.

For more information on this hike, contact hike leader Joy Forehand at jwfbga AT gmail.com or call (706) 946-0336.



May 18th (Thursday) BMT - Hiwassee River to Lost Creek Campground and Back

Many hikers consider this section outstanding as it parallels Big Lost Creek through a deep limestone gorge with cascades and small waterfalls. Consider wearing water shoes as some might want to take a shortcut through the creek to the picnic tables rather than the BMT road walk to the campground picnic tables.

We'll hike to Lost Creek Campground, eat lunch and then hike back to our cars at the USFS River Access Recreation Area. You'll see the designated "National Scenic River" (the Hiwassee) as well as the historic Webb Brothers store in Reliance. The campground has picnic tables and vault toilets. Hike is 5.6 miles, easy-moderate difficulty, approximately three hours on the trail.

For more information, contact hike leader Clare Sullivan at clare7982 AT gmail.com

May 26 (Friday) Covered Bridge to Covered Bridge on BMT in Sisson property

Using the BMT and adjacent (mostly) dirt roads, this leisurely hike will link the two covered bridges in the Sisson's Cherry Log Mountain log cabin community. Besides the bridges, we will enjoy two mountain lakes, five footbridges across cascading streams – and, with luck, a lovely stand of nodding trilliums — all in four miles of easy to moderate hiking (hills) with approximately two hours on the trail. It should be sweet. Following the hike we will repair to the Pink Pig for lunch.

For further information, contact hike leaders Tom and Jane Keene at [tkbmta AT gmail.com](mailto:tkbmta@gmail.com) or 770-548-4935 (text ok).

June, 2017

June 3rd (Saturday) Etowah/Boling Park
4-7 miles, average to moderate
Howard Baggett

June 5th (Monday) Turtletown Creek Falls
4 miles, easy to moderate
Evelin Yarns

June 17th (Saturday) BMT Section 11e to Chestnut to Thunder Rock Express to Rhododendron to the Ocoee Whitewater Center
3.8 miles, easy
Clare Sullivan

Mark Your Calendars!!

By Dick Evans

Make plans to attend the 2017 Benton MacKaye Trail Association Annual Meeting November 3rd to 5th, 2017, at Vogel State Park in Georgia. This year's events will be a bit different as the Annual Meeting will be on Friday night, not Saturday. Plans now include a great meal catered by Chef Nancy Blackadar. Chef Nancy has served us twice in the past to raves and we expect this meal will top those!

Vogel State Park has cabins, campsites and RV sites. Just Google the park and make your reservations directly. We will post the meal details later as time nears. Plans are for a communal bonfire on Saturday night, allowing for longer hikes that day so folks can experience all the great hiking in that area.

See You There!

May Newsletter Deadline is May 24, 2017-Thank you!!