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BMTA Officers 2016-2017

President:	Tom Keene
Vice President:	Dick Evans
Secretary:	Joy Forehand
Treasurer:	Margaret Evans
GA M/C:	Barry Allen
TN/NC M/C:	Ken Jones
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Ken Cissna
Store:	Ken Cissna
Membership:	Ralph Heller
Publicity:	Marcia Lehman Marge Heller
Conservation:	Peter Busscher
Past President:	Bob Ruby
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
State Rep GA:	Larry Dumas
State Rep TN/NC:	Rick Harris



BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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AUGUST 2017

President's Column August 2017 by Tom Keene

TN-NC Maintenance Update Major Decisions at the BMTA Annual Meeting

Finding enough maintainers and trip-leaders for work trips in the remote sections of our trail along the Tennessee-North Carolina border has become a major challenge. In recent weeks two lengthy conference calls involving BMTA maintenance leaders have led to a series of proposals that could mean major departures from past BMTA practices. (Special thanks to **Bill Hodge**, former BMTA board member and current leader of the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards [SAWS], for his thoughts and suggestions in the second of these calls).

The proposals generated during the conference calls were discussed at length at our Aug. 19 Board of Directors meeting. They include (but are not limited to!):

- ◆ Seeking grants to enable BMTA to hire summer work-crews who would camp in and do some of the heavy maintenance work in wilderness and other remote areas of the trail.
- ◆ Exploring the possibility of students from local colleges with forestry and recreation programs "adopting" sections of the trail.
- ◆ Conducting -- in concert with the Forest Service -- leadership training classes to increase the number of qualified work trip leaders available.

On August 25 several of us will meet with Michelle Mitchell, at the Forest Service's regional office in Atlanta. Michelle is Manager of Regional Partnerships, and Volunteer & Service Programs in the Forest Service's Southern region. The upshot is that at our November 3 Annual Meeting at Vogel State Park, the BMTA officers will likely have important proposals that could take us in new directions as an association.

You will want to be there! In fact, join us for the entire weekend, November 3-5, for the banquet and business meeting Friday evening as well as all the hikes and social events Saturday and Sunday. See Darcy Douglas' and George Owen's updates in this newsletter to register for the Friday banquet dinner, to identify your go-to hikes and to locate your weekend lodging. See you there!

The Colander Trick and the Total Eclipse

How sweet it was having the August 21 total eclipse follow a path that crossed and remained close to our trail for most of its length. At least four members of our BMTA board hosted eclipse parties and several of our balds became major gathering spots for “totality” viewing. Jane and I enjoyed the occasion at **Beth Roberts**’ beautiful home near Morganton at a party co-hosted by **Ken Cissna**. Below are some of our group in the now familiar pose gazing skyward -- except for those busy conversing with the dogs!

One of my favorite moments of the afternoon was the colander trick, also seen below. I hope your group did it too! There was something both eerie and wonderful about the pattern of crescents that appeared on the white sheet amidst our gasps and “Wows”!



Recommended Reading



“In wilderness is the preservation of the world”-Thoreau

This summer marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of John David Thoreau, the man who, perhaps more than any other, helped Americans appreciate both the beauty and importance of wilderness – to see wilderness, in John Muir’s words, as “a window on the divine.”

I recently came across a fine (and brief!) appreciation of Thoreau by Douglas Brinkley, historian of Rice University. Check it out [HERE](#). As Brinkley notes, it is not just that Thoreau’s own writings delight and inspire us, though they certainly do. More significantly, Thoreau’s writings were a major inspiration for many of the greatest “nature writers” who came after him. A short list: John Muir, Rachel Carson, David Brower, Gary Snyder, Louise Erdrich, Bill McKibbin and Wendell Berry.

The anniversary is also a good time to try some of Thoreau’s less famous works. I heartily recommend *The Maine Woods*. His accounts of several journeys deep into the still VERY raw Maine forests are fascinating, both as natural and human history. The goal of one of those trips is familiar to all readers of this newsletter: **Mt. Katahdin**. Thoreau’s account of a stormy night spent on the side of that famous mountain is at once spellbinding and terrifying – a real 19th century wilderness experience!

ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE!!!!

by Darcy Douglas

We certainly hope you are firming up your plans for this year's annual meeting.

1 – **Lodging**.... (Vogel State Park cabins or RV or camping, Blood Mountain Cabins near Neels Gap, motels in Blairsville).

2 – **Food** Make your reservation online with PayPal or send in a check with the form you'll find on the website (click [HERE](#)) for the Friday Evening Meal.... bring *trail lunches* for all three days and join us for a **Social Hour** at Blood Mountain Cabins Saturday afternoon at 5pm after your hike and before your dinner with friends in Blairsville on your own.

3 – **Clothing**.... Casual as always, hiking clothes for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday hikes.

4 – **Transportation**.... A Georgia State Park pass or \$5 per car will be needed to get into Vogel State Park for the Friday events and for hike meeting places that might start there.....show up at announced meeting places for the hikes and the leader will work out shuttle and carpooling arrangements. If you need help with this, please contact Darcy (bmtadarcy AT yahoo.com). Some libraries loan Georgia State Park passes so it might be worth checking if you live in Georgia.

5 – **Meeting**... We are working on a speaker and will let you know soon who that might be! We will elect officers for the upcoming year and you can see those nominees in this newsletter. Nominations from the floor are always welcome for any position. We will give out our annual maintainer awards as well as noting other accomplishments of the club in 2017.

6 – **Hiking**... George Owen and Ken Cissna are planning hikes for all three days. Specifics about where to meet and when will be available closer to the meeting but you can see the hikes and leaders in the newsletter to start making your choices!

Please contact Darcy at the email address above if you have questions. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have, and can even give correct answers from time to time!

HOPE TO SEE YOU NOVEMBER 3-5, 2017!!!!



2017 BMTA ANNUAL MEETING HIKES

by George Owen

NOTE: *Next newsletter this list will be repeated with meeting times and places. An asterisk * indicates limited to 12 because in wilderness.*

FRIDAY, NOV. 3 (All hikes leave from Vogel State Park lakeside parking lot across from welcome center)

Hike #1 - In Vogel State Park hike around lake including falls and nature loop trail (easy ca. 2 mi.)
Leader: Bob Ruby

Hike #2 - *Bear Hair Trail out of Vogel - moderate loop, side trail to vista (moderate, 4 mi.) Leader: Ken Cissna

Hike #3 - *Byron Herbert Reese parking to Mountain Crossings and return (includes AT store) (moderate, 3.5 mi.) Leader: Mike Pilvinsky

Note: Saturday and Sunday hikes will all be morning hikes.

SATURDAY, NOV. 4

Hike #1 - Skeenah Creek at Hwy. 60 on BMT to Toccoa River swinging bridge and return (moderately strenuous, 7.2 mi.) Leaders: Phil & Debra Guhl

Hike #2 - *Some Trails of Brasstown Bald - Trail to summit and back and Wagon Train Trail to second overlook and return (moderate, 5 mi.) Leader: George Owen

Hike #3 - Waterfalls Trek - Helton Creek Falls and two DeSoto Falls (easy, ca. 3 mi., add Vogel Lake Falls for 3.9 mi.) Leader: Ken Cissna

Hike #4 - *Blood Mountain Loop from Byron Herbert Reese parking (strenuous, 6.4 mi.) Leader: Mike Pilvinsky

SUNDAY, NOV. 5

Hike #1 - Springer Mountain two upper loops of AT, BMT (moderate, 6.0 mi.) Leader: George Owen

Hike #2 - *Appalachian Trail from Tesnatee Gap to Neels Gap (strenuous, 6.0 mi) Leader: Darcy Douglas

BMTA 2017-2018 Board Nominees

BMTA Nominating Committee for 2018 Officers

Slate of Proposed Nominees

Nominating Committe Members:

Tom Keene, Joy Forehand, Dick Evans, Ralph Heller, Ken Cissna and Darcy Douglas

Position	2017 Holder	Yrs. In Service	2018 Nominee
President	Tom Keene	1	Tom Keene
Vice President	Dick Evans	1	George Owen
Secretary	Joy Forehand	4	Joy Forehand
Treasurer	Margaret Evans	5	Margaret Meadows
GA Maintenance	Barry Allen	3	Barry Allen
TN/NC Maintenance	Ken Jones	2	*FTF
Smokies Coordinator	Dick Evans	3	Larry Dumas
Membership	Ralph Heller	1	Darcy Douglas
Publicity	Marge Heller & Marcia Lehman	2	Jeff DePaola
Conservation	Pete Busscher	2	Pete Busscher
Hiking	Ken Cissna	1	Ken Cissna
Past President	Bob Ruby	1	Bob Ruby
State Rep: GA	Larry Dumas	2	Appointed by '18 Pres
State Rep: TN/NC	Rick Harris	5	Appointed by '18 Pres
Newsletter Editor	Kathy Williams	N/A (3)	Kathy Williams – Appointed by Board

*FTF –From the Floor at the Annual Meeting: The Nomination Committee is currently seeking interested and qualified members for the TN/NC Maintenance Director. Nominations for this position can be made from the floor at BMTA's Annual Meeting.

For additional details on the TN/NC Maintenance Director position, see this month's President's Column, *TN-NC Maintenance Update -- Major Decisions at the BMTA Annual Meeting*. The article appears on page 1 of this newsletter.

Hike and Help the Hemlocks

By Ralph Heller

Mark your calendars. Thursday, September 14 has been set for our annual Hike and Help the Hemlocks event partnering with Save Georgia's Hemlocks (SGH). For a number of years the BMTA and SGH have joined forces to hike and treat infested hemlock trees in the Chattahoochee National Forest or other areas that have these trees in need of treatment. This year we are returning to the Sisson Cherry Log Mountain development where our trail passes through off Highway 515. We have many members and prospective members who live in or have getaway cabins in the north Georgia mountains.

This is a good chance to learn about this invasive insect that is devastating the hemlocks in the eastern United States. You will be able to participate in the treatment or observe the process. Having participated in this event, you will learn how easy it is to treat your own trees. If your trees are not already infested, they will be soon. It is a lot cheaper to treat the trees yourself than to hire a professional. We have a number of members who live in Cherry Log Mountain, so we would be especially pleased if you could join us.

For more information about the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and the hemlock problem go to www.savegeorgiashemlocks.com.

The meeting location has not yet been established but the time will be 9 am on September 14.

For more information and to **register** for this event, contact Ralph Heller, phone number 770-235-9760 or email [rshbmta AT gmail.com](mailto:rshbmta@gmail.com). I will notify you about the meeting location when that has been established. Let's have a good turnout!



Infected hemlock

Fall Festivals – Need Volunteers

by Marcia Lehman

The fall festivals are coming up quickly and again we need your help to promote BMTA and hiking in general. Our active participation in these events, combined with our enthusiastic volunteers, have generated great publicity for the Benton MacKaye Trail, gained new trail maintainers and added to our BMTA membership.

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 the event. The tent will be stocked with numerous BMTA materials, hiking maps and other valuable information for those who stop by. There are multiple shifts for each day, 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.

The schedule of events:

Arts in the Park in Blue Ridge, GA October 14-15

Apple Festival in Ellijay, GA October 21-22



CARTECAY RIVER LOOP HIKE

by Sara Bland

It was a hot day on August 16 when 14 eager hikers took off on the 3.9 mile Cartecay Loop Trail. We met at Food Lion in Ellijay to carpool to the trail head off Mulkey Road in Ellijay. Upon arrival we took our usual group photo (while we were fresh) and headed out. Although most of us have hiked this trail several times we always look forward to pondering the beauty of the robust Cartecay River.



We had a great group of forest lovers that day. It was great to welcome newcomers:

Dominicus, who moved to Blue Ridge about 6 months ago; Susan, who was just passing through as she traveled throughout the country; and Alan and Diana who split their time in Blue Ridge and Florida. Somehow these people had gotten the word about the hike... I suspect Marge Heller had placed the info in several publications. Thank you Marge for bringing us these new folks. We were also glad to see Howard Baggett back on the trail after his recent cardiac stent procedure. He performed beautifully although he was a "little wet" at the end!

Everybody did great, notwithstanding a temperature high of 92 degrees that day. Of course we stopped several times to ponder the river views, to drink water, snack and to hear our Hiking Director, Ken Cissna, speak about safety on the trail, membership and trail maintenance opportunities.

We had a great time seeing old friends and getting to know our new ones. Another great day in the life of "Easy Trekkers" on the Trail. For those who may not have heard, these shorter hikes have been donned "Easy Trek" hikes. Please come join in the fun sometime!

Happy Trails,
Sara Bland Hike Leader

August Work Trip Report

by Barry Allen with photos courtesy of Mike Kovitch

I never cease to be amazed by the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. I asked for a good turnout in August to handle a long, tough section of trail and our membership responded. In spades. **Thirty-one** members and guests drove from all over to help on the trail. One devoted member, fellow hiker and retired Army chaplain, drove over from Alabama to help for the day (Thanks, Dennis). Four endurance runners and three members of the Atlanta Outdoor Club visited from Atlanta to help on the trail. Thanks to you all.

At the end of the day the Back Country Horsemen of North Georgia, Team Conasauga and the BMTA combined to field 53 volunteers, working 5.2 miles of trail, from Dally Gap to Double Spring Gap. The combined groups finished all 5.2 miles of said trail by 1:50 in the afternoon, leaving only a long walk in the woods to get back to Dally for an afternoon cookout. Unbelievable.

Ten riders from Back Country Horsemen rode to the Tennessee state line, working about half a mile from Double Spring back toward Hemp Top. Next came a ten-man crew with new member Jason Beck, our own endurance man, Bob Cowdrick, four endurance runners and several other well-conditioned folks from BMTA and Team Conasauga. This group hiked in just over 3.5 miles before beginning work on a one mile section of trail beginning just south of Hemp Top and working to the horsemen. Next came Steve Bayliss and another group of 11 from the BMTA and Team Conasauga, beginning work three-quarters of a mile beyond the Rockwell Gap/Penitentiary Branch split and working to tie into the endurance group.



Behind Steve's group, Phil and Debra Guhl brought in another group of sling-bladers to work from Penitentiary. And finally Bob Ruby and Larry Dumas led the remaining group and the largest in number, to work the two miles from Dally to Penitentiary. While this section was less overgrown than some of the other parts of this trail, it was the longest section of trail to work. I wish I could mention everyone by name, but with fifty-three participants (31 BMTA and the rest combined Team Conasauga and BCHNG), I'm afraid all the names would take up the entire newsletter. Once again, I would like to mention the tremendous job done by Ralph Heller in following up with new members. A special thanks to Mike Kovitch who walked, camera in hand, most of the trail, taking pictures all along the way. Mike covered over nine miles of trail, out and back. Not many could have matched him on a warm August day. Let's give a lot of credit to these volunteers. Remember, this is a mid-August workday in Wilderness. The first group of volunteers who linked up with the horsemen covered almost 10 miles of trail with hard hats, long pants and tools. The next group covered about eight miles of trail. The shortest distance covered was almost four miles out and back, working much of that with sling blades. At the end of the day, everyone made it out safely; no serious injuries, but a lot of very tired muscles. Finally, thanks to Bob Wagner of the Back Country Horsemen. Bob set up and cooked for the entire volunteer army. And his Dutch oven desserts were out of this world. This trip was a lot of fun. We'll have to do more along these lines (Grill Masters, we need you!). Please excuse me if I didn't personally talk to you all during the day, but I noticed the help from everyone. Thanks to you all!



Emery Creek Trail

by Ken Cissna



The falls

With the Forest Service roads from the Ellijay side *finally* reopened to the Holly Creek trailhead, I was excited for BMTA to be offering the hike to the Lower Falls on the Emery Creek Trail for the first time in two years. As it turned out, none of the other five guests and three members had experienced the delights of this trail.

Continued next page

For those who haven't had the pleasure, after a quarter mile start along Holly Creek, the trail crosses Holly Creek just above where Emery Creek joins Holly. That stream crossing, the first of ten *each way*, is by far the deepest and most difficult, coming close to most of our knees and over some slippery rocks. We had one minor mishap there but quickly recovered without going in fully. The trail then mostly wanders along Emery Creek, first one side, then the other. Occasionally the creek gets away but its music is with you almost always. We had to scramble over or around a dozen or more downed trees. I've hiked this trail now three times in the past two months and no one I've been with has ever seen so much partridge berry on a trail. Partridge berry is the low groundcover looking plant that sports bright red almost holly looking berries from late summer through winter.

We ate lunch at the top of the lower falls, a beautiful location that I'd not seen before. A big thanks to BMTA member Hank Baudet who wasn't on this hike but who told me a few days earlier that scrambling up the "trail" on the right side of the lower falls was well worth the effort. Don't know why I'd never done that before but I'll never stop at the bottom of the Lower Falls again. In exchange, we skipped the additional mileage to the less interesting Upper Falls.

Although one could hike the Emery Creek Trail its entire length with a shuttle, our route was a simple in-and-out. The hike back to the south was as beautiful as it was coming in.



Looking down from the top of the lower falls.



Hiking Group after Lunch (guests except as indicated)
Left to Right in Back: Pat Hill, member Cindy Minick and member Dan Sweeney
In the Middle: member Beth Roberts, John Urbaitis, Donna DesEnfants and Ray Sherman
In front: Maricruz Sherman



Middle falls from lunch spot.

Canopy of Darkness

by Marge Heller with photos courtesy of Mike Kovitch

We are one step closer to completing the Fall Branch Falls re-route. On August 2nd, GA Maintenance Director, Barry Allen and three members: Ken Cissna, Mike Kovitch, and Mark Yost worked on installing a few more stairs. The work was during the day, but the canopy of trees made it seem like night. No, it wasn't an early Eclipse!



Orange-It looks Good on You!!!

by Bob Ruby

Hunting season is upon us! Get out your orange!

We recommend wearing bright safety colors when in the woods during hunting season.

The season varies, but for firearms it is generally October 21- January 14 in Georgia; September 23- January 10 in Tennessee; October 14 – January 1 in North Carolina. Archery and muzzle loader seasons start earlier. Bright caps can be purchased at Walmart, etc. and pack covers at outfitters. Online retailers also have a large number of selections and sizes. At the annual meeting, BMTA safety shirt are awarded to volunteers with 30+ hours.

Camping, hiking and other recreational uses are allowed year-round in the National Forests, unless otherwise posted at the WMA check station or at a specific recreation site. All WMA visitors are encouraged to wear hunter orange during the hunting seasons. Specific recreation sites may be closed as needed for management purposes by posting at the site.

It is recommended that day hiking begin later in the day due to the early morning hours that hunters prefer. Thru hikers will just have to be aware and alert. For more details contact your local Forest Service Office.

Click on the following web sites for more detailed information:

Georgia: www.georgiawildlife.com/hunting/regulations

Tennessee: <https://www.tn.gov/twra/article/tennessee-hunting-seasons-summary>

North Carolina: <http://ncwildlife.org/Hunting/Season-limits>



September Work Trip Announcement-Section 5a

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** 5a
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, September 9, 2017.
- ◆ **Meet:** 8:00 at Iron Bridge Café, 8436 Aska Road in Blue Ridge or 9:00 at Wilscot Gap on GA 60.
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Lopping, trimming and sling blade work.
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384.

Please join us on Saturday, September 9 as we work Section 5a at Wilscot Gap. This section is without a current maintainer and needs a good summer brush out. For volunteers who may be interested in adopting a section of trail this is your opportunity to look before you leap.

Section 5a is just over two miles in length, from Wilscot to Ledford Gap. We'll park a few vehicles at GA 60 and Wilscot Gap then take the rest up the Forest Service access road to the training area, working downhill most of the way back to Wilscot. We have reports of a tree down on the other end of Section 5 closer to Old Dial so if we have a couple of sawyers available who can break off for this tree (after leaving the restaurant) we'll get the tree out as well.

This should be the last hot summer work day of 2017. Our goal is to finish by 1:00 to 1:30 and be off the trail before the afternoon heat. If a few folks would like to reconvene at Grumpy Old Men in Blue Ridge for an end of the summer adult beverage after our work day then I am happy to oblige.

As always, remember to bring two liters of water and wear long pants and boots. We'll furnish the tools and hardhats.

Hope to see you there!!



BMTA Maintainer Fall Fashion Look

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.

September

September 6th (Wednesday) Amadahy Trail

4 miles, easy-moderate. A nice loop along Carter’s Lake with an optional half mile side trip to the boating campground for lunch.

Contact hike leader Sara Bland at jsbland AT windstream.net

September 23rd (Saturday) Upper BMT-AT Loop at Springer Mt

Several miles, easy to moderate. Day after autumn comes in.

Contact hike leader George Owen at gowen2 AT tds.net

September 29th (Friday) Flat Creek Loop followed by lunch in Blue Ridge.

5.6 miles, moderate

Contact hike leaders Tom and Jane Keene at tkbmta AT gmail.com

October

October 9 (Monday) River Loop at Chestnut Mountain by the Whitewater Center

7.5 miles, moderate

Contact hike leader Evelin Yarns at eyarns AT sprynet.com

October 19th (Thursday) Tanasi Trails at Ocoee Whitewater Center – Bear Paw to Chestnut Mountain Loop.

6.7 miles, moderate-strenuous

Contact hike leader Clare Sullivan at clare7982 AT gmail.com

October 30th (Monday) Etowah/Boling Park – version #2

This is a follow up hike to one we held in this trail system earlier in the year; this hike will take almost all entirely different trails.

5.5 miles, average to moderate

Hike leaders: Ken Cissna and Mike Pilvinsky