



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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President's Column February 2017 by Tom Keene

Blaze of the Month (sort of....)

“Victory has a thousand fathers; defeat is an orphan.” --Napoleon

These words came to mind during the recent Georgia work-trip when a BMT blaze of astonishing imprecision (see below, left) came to our attention just south of the Toccoa River Swinging Bridge. Section Maintainer **Mark Yost**, the target of much raillery for such finely-tuned brushwork, quickly declared that the blaze was the work of “the previous section maintainer.” Naturally.

In fact, we are happy to take Mark at his word, but it did strike us that the contrast between this “orphan” blaze and **Clare Sullivan's** January blaze of the month (see below, right) is pretty dramatic! Time will tell if Mark follows through on his declaration that he will “just cut that tree down and throw it into the Toccoa River.”

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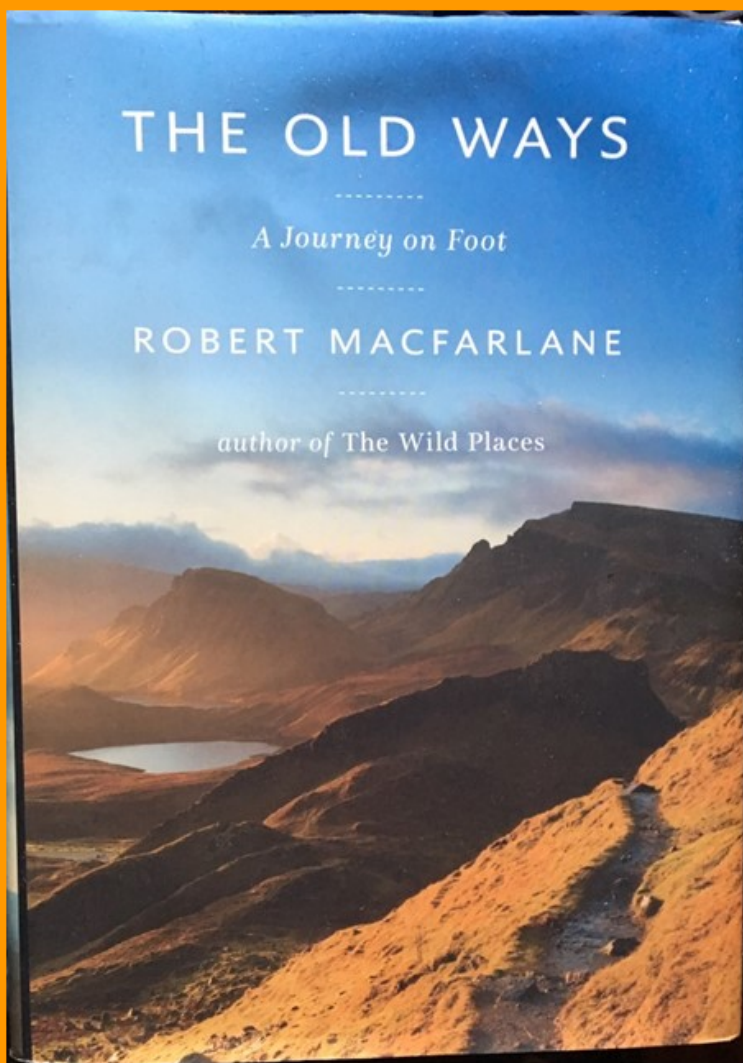
BMTA Headquarters



Talk of the Trail: Website Redo

This is a request for member input. Our Association website looks good and is certainly very useful. But it is also out of date in a number of respects. More important, because it was built over a decade ago on a platform that was, even then, idiosyncratic and clunky (technical terms!). It is very difficult to revise and to keep up to date. **Terry Miller**, our webmaster, has dealt with the related frustrations almost single-handedly for many years. At the February Board of Directors meeting we agreed it was time to take a look at converting the site to a more user-friendly platform and update some obsolete content. We are not thinking of changing the site dramatically; we like the basic look. Rather we want to make the site more user-friendly, both for those who maintain it and the members who use it. If you have thoughts on ways to improve our site, please send them to president@bmta.org. Thanks!

Recommended Reading



Robert MacFarlane, *Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (2012)

Have a soft spot for footpaths? This book is for you! A new champion in the great British tradition of travel writing, Robert MacFarlane tells of his experiences walking some of the oldest footpaths on earth. MacFarlane has read amazingly widely and intermingles his first-hand experiences with delightful references to the history and literature of the places he visits. And what places he walks! Take the Ickneild Way and the Ridgeway, two paths used by the earliest human inhabitants of Britain “connecting Iron Age hill-forts, Bronze Age barrows and neolithic burial chambers.”

MacFarlane lets us feel the ghosts of the walkers who came before, unrolling his sleeping bag beside a neolithic burial site and dreaming of ancient pilgrims heading to sacred places like Stonehenge on foot.

“Leaving a footpath for generations to follow?” Boy, Howdy!

Our Condolences....

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) wishes to extend its sincere condolences to the family and friends of **Mr. Tim Spires**, 57, who died of an apparent heart attack while hiking on our trail near the Toccoa River Swinging Bridge in Georgia. Mr. Spires, a prominent and respected businessman from Chattanooga, Tennessee was an avid outdoorsman and a recent new member of our association. We understand he was in the process of section-hiking the BMT. Again, our most sincere condolences to Mr. Spires family, friends, and business associates. We are deeply sorry for your loss.

2017 Membership Renewal Time Extended

by Ralph Heller – Membership Director

It's that time of year — taxes, a new calendar, and new resolutions are made and hopefully kept. If you procrastinated or just plain forgot and have not already renewed your membership in the BMTA, please resolve to do it this month. Memberships are for the calendar year starting in January, so everyone's membership normally ends in December. However, it's not too late! We are extending the renewal deadline through March. If you renewed within the past couple of months, your membership is current, and you can ignore this message. If you are not sure if you have renewed for 2017, do not worry. I will soon be emailing reminders to everyone (who, according to the database records,) is not current for 2017.

Also, I am interested in membership retention. If you plan on not renewing your membership, please let me know by replying to my email reminder. I would like to know the reason, so that we can try and make membership the best experience possible.

To renew, go to <http://www.bmta.org/Membership.php> on the website and use PayPal with your credit card ...or... make a copy of the Membership Application Form and send it along with a check to the address at the bottom of the form. Be sure to update any information requested on the form, such as phone number, email, house address, and interests.

Remember, both your membership payment and any donations are tax deductible. The BMTA has no paid staff so all donations go to support the trail. Donations by check may be paid using the printed membership form. To make a donation online, click on the "Donate" button on the [bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org) home page. You can then choose to pay by Pay Pal or by credit/debit card.

Many thanks for your past and continued support. If there is anything you can suggest for improving our organization or make your membership a better experience, please let us know.

See you on the trail!!!!

TN/NC Monthly Work Trip - January 28, 2017

by Ken Jones with photos courtesy of Larry Van Dyke

The winter weather certainly cooperated with us to provide a sunny day with just enough cold temperatures to keep us working hard to stay warm. This section provides a challenge since about half of its 2.1 mile length is in Wilderness Study Area. That means that we have to be prepared with power tools as well as traditional tools in order to log out and brush out the trail. It is also home to a significant plant, the ash-leaved bush-pea, that lives along the 0.4 mile segment adjacent to Sixmile Gap. In order to protect this plant, we can only brush out this segment in the winter dormant season. We were certainly privileged to have first time volunteers from the Etowah Boy Scout Troup 74 with us on this work trip. They brought along a crew of two adult leaders and four boy scouts to help with our clearing efforts. Together with the other volunteers, we were able to put this entire section back in great shape. Along the way we certainly enjoyed the long range mountain views, and a bit of history from a state line survey that occurred in 1821. About mid-way through the section stands an inscribed stone marked NC 95. This stone was placed to mark a point on the state line that is 95 miles south of the original survey starting point on Cataloochee Turnpike on the northeast side of the Smokies.



Etowah Scout Troop 74

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Spectacular Views



State Line survey marker from 1821

Brushy Creek Hike

by Hank Baudet

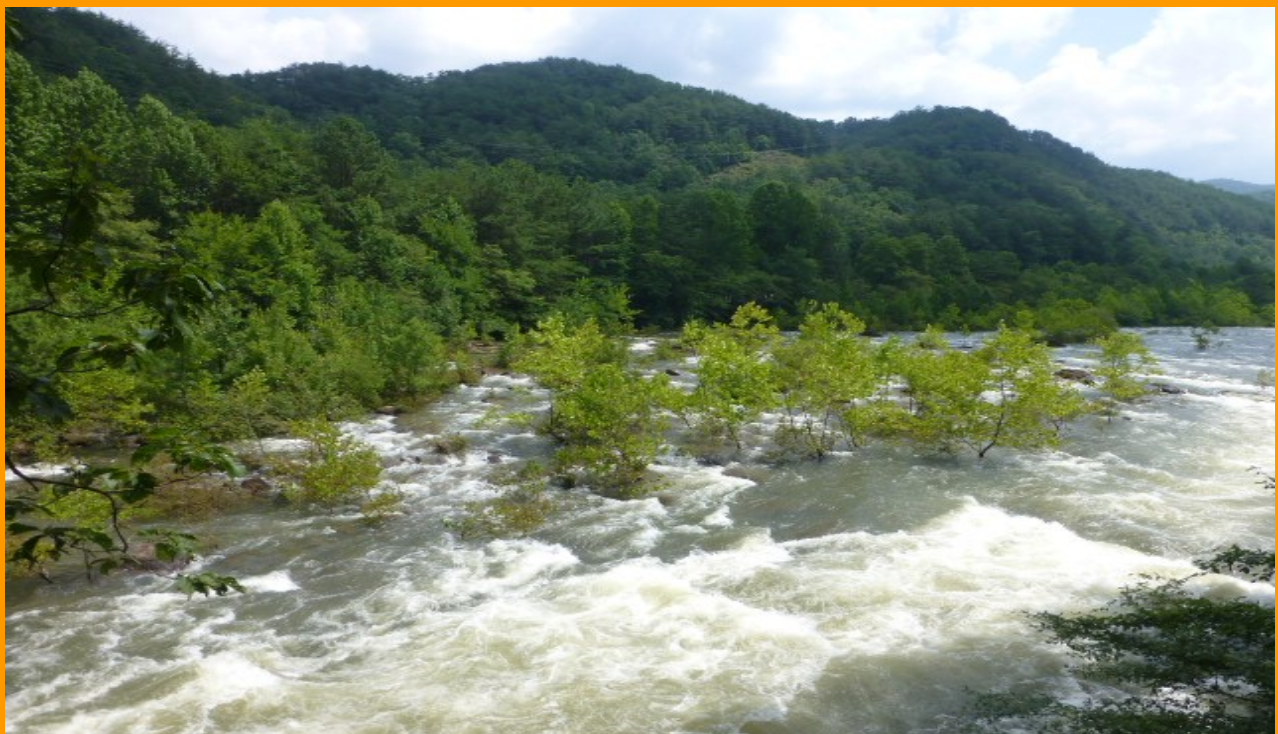
Three BMTA members and three guests, all of whom learned about our hike from the article published in the Ellijay newspaper, answered the 10 am call for a hike on the Brushy Creek Trail near the Ocoee Whitewater Center. After introductions and a brief description of the trail, we set out from Boyd Gap in the Ocoee River Gorge. The weather was slightly cool, and a steady breeze kept the temperature just right for a hike. We had a nice view of the upper Ocoee which, during the rafting season, is a put-in.

About 30 minutes into the hike, we had crossed over a couple of mountains and had left behind the noise of cars and trucks on the highway. We enjoyed lunch on a grassy spot overlooking upper Ocoee Lake. With the wind blowing ripples on the water, it was like looking at diamonds reflecting off the lake.

As the day wore on, the temperature climbed, and we found ourselves shedding some outer layers of clothing. Quite a difference from the day before, when some of us were hiking on a higher elevation trail in the fog with a bit of sleet.

Everyone had a nice relaxing leisure hike with near-perfect weather, great company, wonderful views, and no memorable incidents; however, no one took any pictures to share with you.

The folks sharing the hike this day were Howard Baggett, Jean Haberbush, Ken and Carol Lively, Lina Prince, and hike leader Hank Baudet.



We Need You!!

By Marcia Lehman

This is going to be another exciting year for BMTA! There will be many opportunities for our members to help us promote the BMTA and hiking in general at many events scheduled throughout 2017. Our new event tent has definitely attracted many more people giving us the opportunity to promote the Benton MacKaye Trail, maintenance and 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. 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:

Event	Location	Date
Troutfest	Blue Ridge	April 29
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	May 27-28
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	October 14-15
Apple Festival	Ellijay	October 21-22



Successful Backpacking Class!!

By Marge Heller



The February 7th Beginning Backpacking class was a success!

A total of 27 hikers attended the class conducted by Travis Crouch of North Georgia Mountain Outfitters.

Thanks to all that attended!!

Did he say something about iodine?

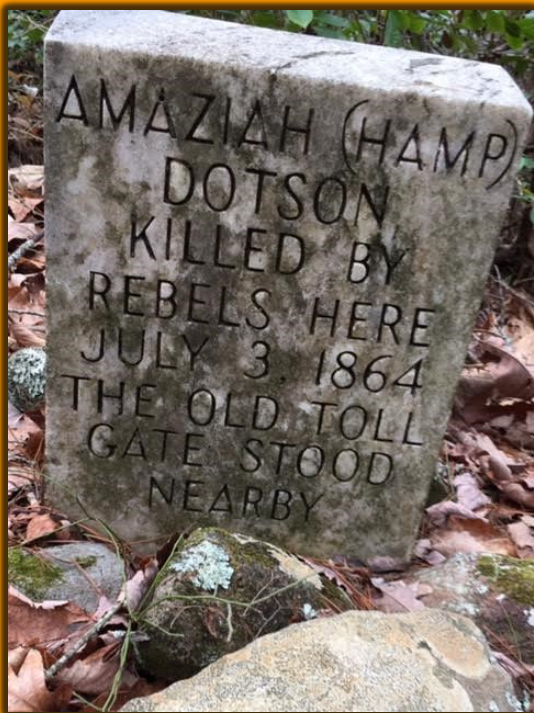


Hey, you in the back pay attention! HA!

BMTA Section 14 + Two Side Trails

by Clare Sullivan

Six BMTA members and two guests had an exciting hike on BMTA Section 14 plus side trails on The Unicoi Trail and to Buck Bald. Others who passed this way, and the events that happened on this trail, are part of our nation's history. We began at Unicoi Gap. During the Civil War, Unicoi Gap, located at the TN/NC border, was a convenient place for bushwackers to ambush travelers. Our first side trail was on the Unicoi Turnpike National Historic Trail to see the tombstone of Amaziah Dotson, a trail tollgate keeper, who was murdered in 1864.



Amaziah Dotson's Tombstone

We saw remains of the Rolling Stone Civilian Conservation Corps and a goldmine. There are historical markers in the forest regarding Bushwackers and Camp Rolling Stone. Some of our hikers entered the goldmine! Gold was discovered in the Coker Creek area in the 1830's. The Unicoi Trail is said to have been used for over 1,000 years, first being used by the Cherokee Nation. It spanned from the Little Tennessee River to Savannah. Other names for it are Tellico Path, Unicoi Path, and the Overhill Trading Path.

In 1812, it became a 12 foot wagon road called The Unicoi Turnpike along which supplies and materials were moved, as well as families. The first tollgate in America was near the site of the CCC camp. A toll was charged for the passage of any "person or thing." "For every man and horse, twelve and one-half cents, for every lead horse not in a drove, six and one-fourth cents." After the Cherokee Removal, the trail also became known as a part of the Trail of Tears.



Into the goldmine!!!

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The BMTA portion had beautiful views along the ridge crest. Our side trail to Buck Bald had panoramic views of three states. In the distance we located Unicoi Gap, Starr Mountain, Chilhowee Mountain, the Reliance area and Big Frog Mountain. Many thanks to hiker Mary Mac Eachron for bringing us Unicoi Turnpike Trail brochures from the Coker Creek Visitors Center. This was a most amazing day!



If you missed this opportunity to enjoy this hike George Owen will be leading this hike again in April giving you a chance to experience the beauty of the trail during spring-time!! See the upcoming hikes in this newsletter for time and contact information.

February Work Trip Section 2c at The Swinging Bridge

By Barry Allen

My goal for the second Saturday in February was to improve a series of 6x6 pressure treated steps just south of the Swinging Bridge on the step up from Forest Service 333. This location is one of the few places where material can be driven straight to the place of need, without the extra labor of hauling to the work site. So, on this Saturday, I loaded my truck with 6x6 pressure treated timbers, rebar, and all the necessary tools, stuffed in a few volunteers, and led the way for four or five other trucks loaded with volunteers. The ever-punctual Marty Dominy brought up the rear, carrying a generator and skill saw in the back of his truck – the perfect equipment to add some finishing touches to each step.

Upon reaching the site, Phil and Debra Guhl reminded us of the necessary safety protocols and trail hazards. They also reinforced the need to drink plenty of fluids and take a few rest breaks. After reviewing our work plan for the day, we promptly broke into three groups. Group 1, consisting of Marty, Mike Kovitch, Frank Forehand, Russ Johnson, Brian Trinkle, Bob Cowdrick, Ed Sullivan and Ken Cissna was tasked with repair and augmentation of the steps. Group 2, led by President Tom Keene and manned by Ralph Heller and Phil and Debra Guhl was assigned water diversion work. Group 3, led by sawyers Gilbert Treadwell and Mark Yost was tasked with small tree, brush and blowdown removal.



Left to Right: Brian Trinkle, Ralph Heller, Mark Yost, Barry Allen, Ed Sullivan, Gilbert Treadwell, Frank Forehand, Bob Cowdrick, Ken Cissna, Russ Johnson, Debra Guhl, Mike Kovitch, Phil Guhl and Marty Dominy. Photo by Tom Keene

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The work on the steps was the critical work for the day: existing steps on a steep section of trail were eroding noticeably. We needed to add additional steps, thereby reducing the rise between each step. By adding additional steps and reworking the grade, we would be able to slow the velocity of the water during heavy rain and eliminate much of the erosion undercutting the existing steps. The plan worked perfectly. Twelve steps are now 24 steps. At each tread, there is now a slight reverse grade to slow the water. On the run of 24 steps, we now have two places to direct water from the slope. Well done team!!



Ed Sullivan and Marty Dominy prepare steps for installation.



Installing new steps: Top L to R – Russ Johnson, Brian Trinkle
Bottom, L to R – Bob Cowdrick and Mike Kovitch.



Water diversion work isn't sexy, but it is critical to these old sections of trail on steep grade. I needed just the right man to lead this work. Maybe not sexy, but stoic and exacting. President Tom Keene was the perfect choice! Well done on the diversion work, gang.

Finally, we needed to get rid of a few trees around and underneath the bridge and a tree down on the trail. Gilbert and Mark made up the final team: Gilbert on saw; Mark on rope. Work accomplished.

Good work, men!

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First time customers: Scout Troup 277 from Marietta, GA.



A campin' and fishin' weekend.

By 2:30 or so, we all remembered Phil and Debra's advice: drink plenty of fluids and take a rest. So we did. At Ed Sullivan's invitation, a number of our group visited a great little place called Grumpy Old Men in Blue Ridge. If you are not familiar with Grumpy Old Men, suffice it to say that they have plenty of fluids!

Hope to see you next month!

BMTA March Work Trip Section 5 – Wilscot Gap to Old Dial Rd

By Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Section 5
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, March 11, 2017
- ◆ **Meet:** Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 or Wilscot Gap parking area, GA Hwy 60 at 9:00
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Tread repair and tree removal
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum 2 liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at bmtabarry@gmail.com or 770-294-7384

Please join us for our March trip as we work Section 5 between Wilscot Gap and Old Dial Rd. With a good turnout, I plan to work two critical needs on this section. The first need is tread repair from recent horse traffic. Unfortunately, there has been a significant amount of horse travel on this section in wet weather. We have notified the USFS and they are making every effort to patrol the area for unauthorized use. However, we still have a few sections of trail that will need to be repaired and re-dug. Most of this work will be between Old Dial Rd and the Firetower.

The second need is for a saw crew to work the trail between Wilscot and Ledford. We have a handful of trees across the trail on this section that need removal – if we have good turnout.

I'll set up a plan based on expected turnout, so please let me know if you can help on Saturday, March 11.

NOTE: I MAY CHANGE THE 9:00 MEETING PLACE FROM WILSCOT GAP TO OLD DIAL ROAD, DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF A SCOUTING TRIP, SO WATCH FOR UPDATES.



Work Trip Report

by Dick Evans

On a beautiful day in mid-February, Keith Mertz, Jim Kriner and Dick Evans headed up on Yellow Creek Mountain to blaze trail and clear this winter's blowdowns. This 1.5 mile sections follows a ridge and has great views into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to the north, and the Yellow Creek Valley to the south. On clear days, Blood Mountain in Georgia can be spotted from a few locations. The distant photos are of the Hangover Ridge, the BMT following the left hand portion of that ridge before dropping down behind Hangover to Big Fat Gap.



Hangover Ridge



Yellow Creek Mountain Trail

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Training Report

When volunteers use a chainsaw (or crosscut saw) on Forest Service property, they are required to receive periodic training for the task. Often, this is conducted by the local District, however, for Cheoah (Graham County) District, we hit a snag. We had planned past training sessions to take place in January or February so that the crews were trained when the winter gives up and we can get out on the trail. As they say, Man plans and God laughs, as the Forest Service Trainer was reassigned. Although his replacement got on board in December, the wild fires in the area prevented him from being certified to teach, leaving about 20 sawyers from several groups facing the prospect of not being able to clear trail. Fortunately, we were able to engage a local Certified Trainer for the First Aid / CPR Class on February 16th, followed by a chainsaw recertification class being taught by a volunteer who drove several hours to Robbinsville.

At the conclusion, 19 Recertified Sawyers and one new Sawyer were passed and now fully ready to attack the trails. BMTA folks included Larry Van Dyke, Jim Kriner, Kim Hainge, Dave Hagen and Dick Evans, as well as "JP" from Fontana, who maintains trails in that area, and Trevor Hayes, who maintains trail in the Tapoco Area.

The photos show the field portion, conducted on a 50 degree slope, because, as the Certifier said, "That's the kind of trail you guys clear. If you can do it here, you can clear anywhere." A great couple of days was had by all.



Dave Hagen



Dick Evans



JP clearing



Larry VanDyke

Hike to Big Frog Mountain

by Tom Sewell

Thirteen hikers, 10 BMTA members and three guests, celebrated Presidents' Day February 20 by hiking up the Big Frog and BMT trails to Big Frog Mountain. At 4,224 feet tall, Big Frog Mountain is the highest point between there and the Big Bend in Texas or the Black Hills of South Dakota. Our trail treated us to 1300 feet of elevation change in 11 miles from the parking area on FS 221. The weather was just perfect. Because the trails are located in a wilderness area, we divided into two groups for the hiking. Minor blow downs were incurred on the Big Frog trail, but once we reached the BMT section it was found to be in perfectly maintained shape. After the hike, the Sullivans graciously invited us to their nearby home for some delicious refreshments and food.



Luckily this was the only big blow down and was at the start of the hike.

Pictured (left to right)

Standing-Ed Sullivan, Clive and Rita Poole, Joe Kelly, Evelin Yarns, Tim Holby, Carolyn Sewell, and Larry Jarkovsky
Kneeling-Anne Andersen, Ginny Smith, Bob Brown and Clare Sullivan

Photo by Tom Sewell

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Big Frog

Wagon Train Trail Hike

Brasstown Bald to Young Harris

by Ken Cissna

Oh my! Twenty-one hikers—well, twenty if you don't count Bob Brown's cute dog, Polo, but, of course, I do—met in Young Harris for the joint Georgia Forest Watch—BMTA hike down from Brasstown Bald. We were about evenly divided between BMTA and GFW members, with myself, Beth Roberts, and Suzy Downing being members of both organizations. Because most of the hike would be in wilderness, we split into two groups. I led the first, perhaps to be the slightly faster group, and all ten of us piled into Ed and Clare Sullivan's van for the ride to the top: Beth Roberts, Ed and Clare Sullivan, Bob and Polo Brown, Karen Martin, Janet and Richard Ihns, Cindy Minnick, and Edward Straw, and me, Ken Cissna. As things worked out, we didn't see the other group again, who were slowed by some members experiencing knee problems on the unrelenting downhill of the trail. Sue Harmon of GFW led the second group, which included BMTA members Ann Miller, Martha Fowler, Suzy Downing, and Joe and Kathleen Kelly, among other hikers.



We had fine weather and lovely views, and were able to see some of the ice formations on the rocks — although with the weather above freezing, they were melting as we watched. The hike was about seven miles.

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.

March

March 4th (Saturday) Etowa River Trails near Boling Park in Canton

Here is a hidden gem convenient to our Atlanta hikers tucked behind Boling Park in Canton, Georgia—complete with two hilly loops and an easy return along the Etowah River. 7.6 miles with 1139 feet total elevation change. We will snack at the "Haunted Church" and visit the "Satanic Baptismal."

For further information, contact hike leader Howard Baggett at howardeb AT windstream.net.

March 11th (Saturday) Byron Reece to Blood Mt. (rescheduled from January)

Hike to the highest point on the Georgia Appalachian Trail. From the Byron Reece Trail parking lot to the AT, then south to the top of Blood Mountain and return. About five moderately strenuous miles, including over two miles of uphill climbing.

For further information, contact hike leader Mike Pilvinsky mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com.

March 15th (Wednesday) Upper BMT-AT Loop at Springer Mt.

A relatively short and easy chance to stretch your legs with an early spring hike. Starts and ends at Springer Mt. parking lot. See Springer Mt., the Springer Mt. shelter on the AT, as well as the Benton MacKaye plaque and the Owen Overlook on the BMT.

For further information, contact hike leader George Owen at gowen2 AT tds.net.

March 25-26 (Saturday-Sunday) Beginning Backpack on Amadahy Trail

A chance to put into practice what you learned at February's "Beginning Backpacking Class" conducted by Travis Crouch and sponsored by BMTA. Hike is two miles and easy. Camping on the shore of Carter's Lake.

For further information, contact hike leader Mike Pilvinsky at [mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com](mailto:mikepilvinsky@hotmail.com).

April

April 13th (Thursday) Green Mountain Trail

An easy/leisure hike of about four miles, with moderate elevation gain and loss. Should be a nice early spring hike, with good views of Lake Blue Ridge. We will begin at the Deep Gap trailhead on Aska Road, intersect with the Long Branch Connector, and end up at the Shady Falls parking area a couple of hours later. A short shuttle of less than two miles.

For further information, contact hike leader Hank Baudet 706-946-4318 or [Geezer95 AT gmail.com](mailto:Geezer95@gmail.com)

April 23 (Sunday) Two Trail History Hike - Unicoi Turnpike Trail to Unicoi Gap, then Benton MacKaye Trail to Hwy. 68

Join amateur history buff and one of the BMTA founders George Owen for a double treat. First, we will walk the history-laden Unicoi Turnpike Trail where in parts the Cherokees walked and were then force-marched to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears. Along this 2.5-mile federally-designated National Millennium Trail, you will also visit the site of the Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Rolling Stone, a Civil War era grave of a bushwhacked man, and other sites. Then, we intersect the BMT on a low ridge, walk quickly into Unicoi Gap, then turn and trek along a very mild ridge on the BMT and down to TN 68. Total hike distance is 7.4 miles, and overall rating is moderate.

For further information, contact George Owen at [gowen2 AT tds.net](mailto:gowen2@tds.net) or 706-374-4716 for information.



March Newsletter Deadline is March 22, 2017-Thank you!!