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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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MAY 2017

President's Column May 2017 by Tom Keene

North Georgia Wind Event – A Timeline

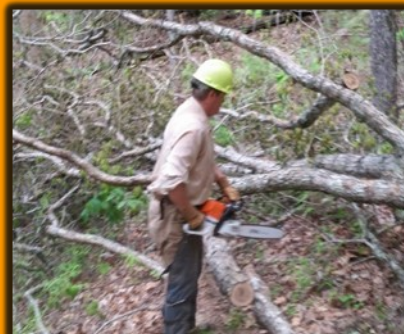
May 4 – Major wind event in North Georgia causes tremendous damage across North Georgia. Almost before the blowdowns hit the ground, **Ralph Heller** sends out an alert to the Georgia maintenance team.

May 5 – Email from Georgia Maintenance Director **Barry Allen** mobilizes maintainers and work trip regulars to walk the trail and record blowdowns - their size, difficulty and locations. Within hours **Joy Forehand** sends reports with pictures on areas just walked. Joy's report is followed quickly by reports from **Clare and Ed Sullivan, Mark Yost, Seth Stanley, Jeff DePaola, and Russ Johnson** on additional sections. By the end of the day Barry announces a shift in the focus of the May 13 work trip to complete the impromptu trail audit and to begin the work of clearing the trail.

May 10 – Barry circulates section-by-section status report based on auditors' information. The report is improved as more reports come in and guides the assignments to sawyers and swamper in the days ahead.

May 12-13 – Multiple sawyer-swamper teams attack the numerous blowdowns on multiple sections.

May 20 – The worst blockages are cleared; work continues elsewhere as schedules permit.



Before and after shot of a tangle blocking the trail on Section 2 near the Swinging Bridge. Barry Allen wielding the saw; photo by Phil Guhl.

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 AT segment from the Neel Gap store to the summit of 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.

THE FOREST AS CATHEDRAL: A ROLE REVERSAL

In my southeastern Pennsylvania elementary school we frequently sang a song called “The Green Cathedral.” It began --

I know a green cathedral,
a shadowed forest shrine,
Where leaves in love join hands above
to arch your prayer and mine.

That song came back to me in a big way on our recent trip to Spain when we explored the Sagrada Familia (Sacred Family) Basilica in Barcelona. The church, which was begun in 1882 and is still not completed, is based on the vision of Antoni Gaudí, a highly original modernist architect who died in a streetcar accident in 1926 when the building was less than one-quarter complete. The hope is to finish it in 2026 on the centenary of Gaudí's death.



The exterior of the basilica, seen on the left topped by construction cranes, is certainly striking. It has an almost whimsical Hobbit-Gothic quality. But it's the interior of the building that was the stunner to me. The interior columns and the ceiling are explicit and dazzling representations of a towering forest with a high canopy. Meanwhile the stained glass is used, not to represent biblical scenes, but to represent the play of light as it falls through holes in the canopy onto the forest floor. Instead of the forest as cathedral, it's the cathedral as forest! I assure you, these iPhone photos don't do it justice. If you get a chance, check it out in person. It is (literally) awesome!



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 the 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.

“As the Socks Turn”

by Ken Jones

TN/NC Monthly Work Trip – 04/29/2017

How did we get summer weather in the end of April for our monthly work trip? Just lucky we guess! The temperature hit 90 degrees for the afternoon, as six workers ran brush cutters and loppers to clear Section 12d. This 3.9 mile section runs between McFarland Road and Lost Creek Campgroup, and was heavily damaged by a fire. The result was a number of dead trees that continue to fall across our trail, as well as the vicious growth attendant to all of the fresh sunlight. A crew of three sawyers logged this section out two weeks prior to our work trip. So for this trip, we concentrated on brushing out the trail. Our new maintainer for this section, Joe Solsbee, came on this work trip and brought a new first time worker, Roger Constant, with him. We really appreciate Roger helping us on this hot day, and hope that he will join us again for future work trips. In addition to brushing out about half of the section, we also moved a sign and post to a more critical location. This sign was placed about eight years ago on a turn in a wildlife road. Recent logging activity had created a new road straight ahead for northbound hikers and no trees left to blaze. Now the logging road has grown over and blazes are painted in the correct places. The new location for the sign was obviously in need of one since someone had marked the turn with two old white socks placed on sticks. We were able to plant the sign in a good new location, and remove the impromptu sock markers. To battle the summer heat we drank lots of fluids and took frequent breaks. Phyllis Jones provided cold drinks mid-afternoon to help keep the workers refreshed.

Thanks go to the following workers for another safe and productive work trip: Claire Sullivan, Larry Daugherty, Joe Solsbee, Roger Constant, Phyllis Jones and Ken Jones.



Claire Sullivan stars in the hit series “As the Socks Turn.”



Part of the brush cutter crew: Joe Solsbee, Roger Constant and Larry Daugherty.



The replacement show for “As the Socks Turn”. Will the mystery trail workers please sign in: Joe Solsbee, Roger Constant, Larry Daugherty, Ken Jones and Claire Sullivan.

Lady Slipper Hike

by Joy Forehand with photos courtesy of Tom Pickering, Susan Roberts and Joy Forehand



Back row: Mary Owens, Ellen VanderLinden, Cindy Minick, Frank Forehand and Tom Pickering. Front row: Thayer Tucker, Kat Cason, and Kathy Pickering. Kneeling: Susan Roberts and Bob Brown.

The weather was crisp and sunny as seven members of BMTA and four guests embarked on the Third Annual Lady Slipper Hike (May 3, 2017).

The hike began with a quarter-mile walk on the section of the BMT that follows a pristine creek up to Fall Branch Falls.

Unfortunately, the trail is badly eroded and soon will be replaced by a half-mile reroute. Only a few finishing touches remain on the new section to the falls.

The cascading water of the falls was beautiful as the hikers paused for a group picture.

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The trek continued uphill to the BMT's intersection with the Stanley Gap Trail, continuing on to cross the Tennessee Divide. Shortly thereafter, the hikers encountered a small garden of the pink ladies.

As the hikers approached Rocky Mountain, they were treated to a wide variety of forest flowers. Kat Cason spotted a seldom-seen *Trillium Vaseyi*. Other more common *Trillium* (*Trillium Luteum*, *Grandiflorum* *Trillium* and *Catesby's Trillium*), huge fern beds (including the majestic Cinnamon Fern) and large patches of distinctive May Apples dotted the landscape.



The hike continued up a side trail to the top of Rocky Mountain where hikers paused for lunch.

The best Lady Slipper Garden on this year's hike was found at the water cutoff on BMT's Weaver Creek section where the large pink orchids lined both sides of the trail. As we proceeded up Scroggin Knob and then down to Weaver Creek, there were numerous small Lady Slipper Gardens as well as a couple of Mountain Laurels ready to bloom!

Hiwassee River to Lost Creek Campground

by Clare Sullivan

May 18, 10 BMTA members and three guests enjoyed an 8.2 mile hike along a scenic wonderland from the Hiwassee River in Reliance, TN, to Lost Creek Campground, Section 12-13 of the Benton MacKaye Trail. This is an easy to moderate hike through a picturesque limestone gorge with several cascading waterfalls. Originally the trail was an old logging road and then became a jeep road until the snow storm of 1993. The forest service decided not to clear the blowdowns and closed the road at that time. In addition to the soothing sound and beauty of the creek we enjoyed a multitude of Indian Pink, some wild geranium, milkweed, mock orange, yellow root, mountain bluet and several other wildflowers in bloom.

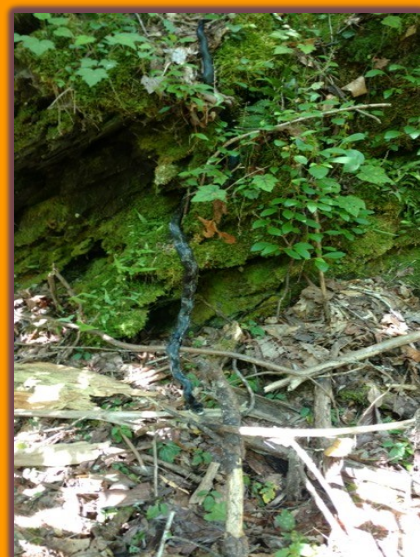


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The excitement of the day was a six foot rat snake climbing down the side of the cliff towards the trail. The four water crossings felt nice and cool as we hiked to the picnic tables. After our lunch we hiked back to the recreation area and enjoyed ice cream at the Hiwassee Outfitters store! Participants on the hike were Diane Payne, Sharon Skeen, Sandy McClure, Larry Jarkovsky, Bill Rowe, Evelin and Doug Yarns, Polly Warren, Bob Brown, Cindy Minick, Ruth Horn and Clare and Ed Sullivan.



Indian Pink



May Work Trip Report

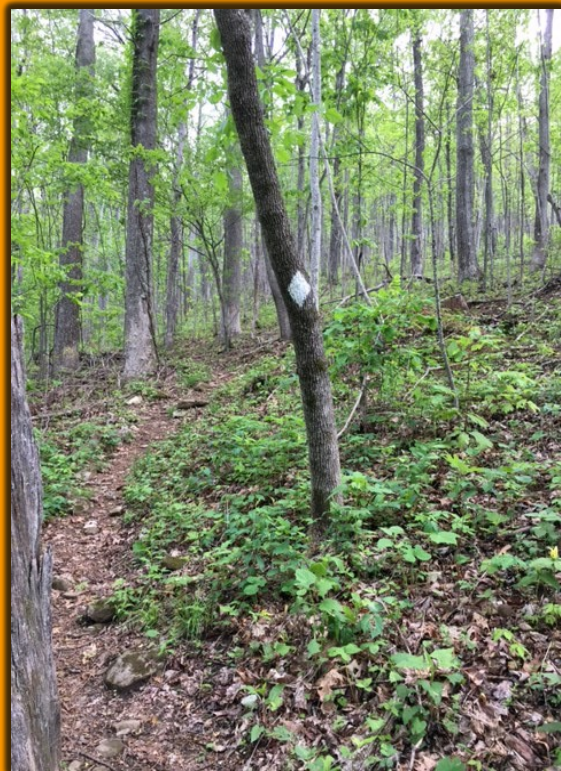
by Barry Allen

The original plan had been to use the second Saturday in May to replace a run of steps, long since deteriorated, just north of GA 60 and Little Skeenah Creek. But things don't always work according to plan. When severe storms with strong winds hit the North Georgia area on May 4th it was time to change plans. Trees were down all over the Blue Ridge and Cherry Log areas and the concern was that many trees were down along the trail. A decision was made to use the second Saturday to survey the trail for tree problems, allowing saw crews to begin the process of removing blowdowns.

On the second Saturday we sent out teams to walk Section 3 and more of Sections 8 and 9. We also ran saw crews from Brawley Mtn. to Ga 60 and from Skeenah Gap to Wilscot Gap – a total of five teams walking and sawing the trail. Marty Dominy had already opened the first half mile of section 4 from Wilscot Gap. A few days later, another saw crew worked to open Section 7 through the Sisson Property, where several homeowners had reported down trees.



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May's work event was not confined to the second Saturday. It was a unique event extending for a couple of weeks immediately following a unique weather event. More than 25 people worked – some on multiple days – to check trail and begin the tree removal process. And while the work is not complete, most of the worst problems have been removed. Over the coming weeks, additional saw crews will work to remove more blowdowns. Thanks to you all. You did a remarkable job to ensure the Benton MacKaye Trail Association fulfilled its mission of maintaining the trail.

See you next month on Section 3!

BMTA at Trout Fest

by Marcia Lehman; photos courtesy of Marge Heller



The second annual Trout Fest in Blue Ridge, GA, drew a much larger crowd this year and proved very successful again for BMTA. We had several people interested in maintaining and/or hiking the trail. Many thanks to our festival volunteers for their time and efforts to ensure the BMTA continues to be an organization that fosters conservation of our forests "leaving footpaths for generations to follow".



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.

June 9th (Friday) Turtletown Creek Falls

4 miles, easy to moderate

Contact Hike Leader Evelin Yarns at eyarns AT sprynet.com

June 17th (Saturday) BMT Section 11e to Chestnut to Thunder Rock Express to Rhododendron to the Ocoee Whitewater Center

3.8 miles, easy

Contact Hike Leader Clare Sullivan at clare7982 AT gmail.com

June 24th (Saturday) Etowah/Boling Park #2 – rescheduled from June 10th

4-7 miles, average to moderate

Contact Hike Leader Howard Baggett at howardeb AT windstream.net

July 1st (Saturday) Jacks River from Dally Gap

9 miles, easy to moderate.

Contact Hike Leader Ginny Smith at gmsmith123 AT hotmail.com

July 14th (Friday) Watson Gap to junction with Hemptop Trail

7.6 miles, moderate

Contact Hike Leader Darcy Douglas at bmtadarcy AT yahoo.com

July 15th (Saturday) “After the Fire” #2 – Rough Ridge and Cowpen Trails

Six month follow-up to January’s hike on same trails

Contact Hike Leader Bob Ruby at bmtabob AT gmail.com

July 22nd (Saturday) Tanasi Trail System at the Ocoee Whitewater Center Rhododendron and Old Copper Road Trail

3.5 miles, easy; plus 1-mile trail around the Ocoee Whitewater Center

Contact Hike Leader Larry Dumas at ldumas AT tds.net

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!



"The Wilderness and Woods are more beautiful that I can remember seeing. Everything is lush, green, full of large blossoms, the leaves are much bigger than usual. It seems like it rained Miracle Gro on the Cohuttas. Hard to explain. Have seen more animals, too. Bears and Bucks, which I don't usually see very often and big too. Snakes abound, so watch your step. Have seen timber rattlers, but more of the non-poisonous ones. We have a black snake that suns on our greenhouse every day and hangs his head over the side to watch us." -Rosemary Willmot

June Newsletter Deadline is June 21 , 2017-Thank you!!