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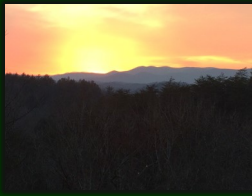
Oh, No, Mabel!

Boling Park

Two Bridges

Green Mountain

Upcoming Hikes



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BMTA Headquarters



President's Column

Annual Meeting Shifts from Tapoco to Coker Creek

TN-NC Maintenance Progress

In John Muir's Footsteps

BMTA VP **George Owen** and his annual meeting committee and the BMTA Executive Committee have decided to shift the location of our annual meeting November 2-4, 2018, from the **Historic Tapoco Lodge**, Robbinsville, North Carolina, to the **Coker Creek Village** in Tellico Plains, Tennessee. We apologize for the inconvenience to members who had already made reservations at Tapoco.

We regret having to make this change. The Tapoco Lodge is a beautiful place and we had a wonderful meeting there in November of 2016, one of our best ever. The decision came because Tapoco, under new management, has made major renovations and other investments and is seeking to move very substantially upscale on all fronts. We certainly wish them well.

Coker Creek Village has also improved its facilities since we were there last, but is still well within our price range, and, as George mentions in his article below, is welcoming our return most enthusiastically!

We hope you will join us November 2, 3 and 4 at Coker Creek Village. See George's article on page four for more details.

TN-NC Maintenance Progress: Trail Crew Leaders Workshop

Call them the Ocoee Ten! In early March, **John Zardis, Clare and Ed Sullivan, Larry Van Dyke, Ralph Van Pelt, Debra and Phil Guhl, Larry Dumas, Darcy Douglas and Rick Harris** participated in a training program put on at the Ocoee District Office of the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee by **Ryan Farr and Walt Beady**.

See them below, along with colleagues from SORBA and the Backcountry Horsemen, in the classroom and in the field during the training (photos by Rick Harris).



The aim of the program was to prepare participants to organize and lead work trips, especially in the Tennessee and North Carolina sections of the BMT. All agreed Ryan and Walt did a superb job with the two-day training. The group is now organizing itself to take turns leading the regular monthly TN-NC work trip the fourth Saturday of each month. The aim is to begin the new rotation with the May 26 work trip. Keep an eye out for the work trip announcements on the new BMTA-Maintenance Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BMTAMaintenance/>), edited by Rick Harris. The Ocoee Ten's enthusiasm and collaborative efforts are an extremely promising development in improving our maintenance of the BMTA's TN-NC sections.

Recommended Hiking - Scenic River Indeed!

Tennessee's Hiwassee-Ocoee Scenic Rivers State Park was the site of the spring BMTA Board of Directors meeting. The park staff, led by Park Ranger Angelo Giansante, were extremely kind, the facilities were excellent, and we got a lot done. Still, it was a dazzlingly beautiful day, and productive as the meeting was, it seemed a little wrong to spend the morning inside, sorting out the association's budget and deliberating over how many new hardhats to buy.

Happily, some of us were able to stay on after the meeting to hike a nearby section of the BMT with **George Owen** as our guide. That section, between Big Bend and Childers Creek, runs right along the Hiwassee River (see the map below). Somehow, though I have been active in the BMTA for 20 years, I had never before hiked it. What a mistake! It proved to be one of the most beautiful hikes I've ever taken.



The broad Hiwassee River, with plenty of shoals for trout and fishermen alike, provided a perfect backdrop of sight and sound. As other images below attest, the spring flowers were already at full cry, the moss-covered cliffs along the river were glowing with color and sparkling with water from recent rains, and the odd fungi and gnarled cedar "driftwood" were pretty amazing too. This is an area where the BMT runs together with the John Muir Trail. Muir walked here in 1867, as a young man, long before he went west, and kept a journal which he turned into his first book, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. It was fun to think of young John Muir walking where we did, and developing that exquisite sense of wild beauty he later shared with us all.



Special thanks to **Clayton Pannell** and the Cherokee Hiking Club, our section maintainers, who had the trail in excellent shape! John Muir would surely be proud! If you have not already....walk this section of the Benton MacKaye Trail!

Register Now for the 2018 Annual Meeting at Coker Creek Village, November 2-4

by George Owen

It's being readied for you - yes, we are returning to Coker Creek Village (henceforth CCV) for our **BMTA Annual Meeting Weekend November 2-4** at Coker Creek Village in extreme southeastern Tennessee.

This lovely campground on TN Highway 68 between Ducktown and Tellico Plains has several times been the BMTA annual meeting site over our 38-year history. The owners of CCV remember us well and fondly, and are giving us special rates for the weekend. Our plans are for most folks to come in Friday afternoon and stay until sometime Sunday, so housing is available for the nights of November 2nd and 3rd. You may also come for one night or even just to the big annual meeting itself on Saturday evening.

Cost for this event is modest. Cabins are \$60 per night with modest-size refrigerators and microwaves, and bunkhouse beds are \$22 per night. These facilities all have heat and air conditioning. Each meal, including the special Saturday evening meal and package trail lunches, is \$10 apiece. Cabins are already going fast, so hurry. Anyone wishing to tent camp, please call CCV.

Multiple hikes with different levels of difficulty are already being planned. The Benton MacKaye Trail is on the high ridge just behind the campground and many other trails are nearby, including to several scenic waterfalls and multiple vistas. Equipment for various outdoor games are freely provided by the camp, as are other great outdoor amenities. We are also seeking to establish some special activities for non-hiking significant others and children - all to be announced soon.

So go to the application form on the next page and sign up now. If you have questions, you may contact CCV at 423-261-2310. More information and many pictures are on the website, www.cokercreekvillage.com - and you may also contact George Owen for further general information at (706) 374-4716.

So please go to the application form on the page six and sign up now! To receive the special rate, be sure to say you are "with the Benton MacKaye Trail Association weekend"!

2018 BMTA Annual Meeting Committee: George Owen, Chairman
Members: Darcy Douglas, Debra Guhl, Rick Harris and Mike Pilvinsky



TN Highway 68 sign of welcome!



Picturesque lodge.



Only a few of the many cabin options!



Covered bridges and donkeys!
What more could you wish for?!!



COKER CREEK VILLAGE
November 2-4, 2018
Benton MacKaye Trail Association- 3 Day/2 Night Retreat
One reservation per person to be filled out

Name: _____ Cell Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Address: _____

Payment form: Check to Coker Creek Village or credit card: _____ Expires: _____

Price for the above retreat includes:

1. Outstanding staff to work with each group, including meeting area setup prior to arrival, staff led on site high adventure activities, organizing group games and evening activities. Horse Trail Rides (Guided) are an extra fee, contact us for information.
2. Safe, secure environment where each group can connect.
3. Limited area for cell phone coverage with Version carriers. Password protected Wi-Fi available to leaders only.
4. Use of all Coker Creek Village common use areas, i.e., bath houses, swimming pool (in season).
5. Group meeting area.
6. Use of equipment for field games, volleyball, tetherball, basketball, ultimate Frisbee, Frisbee golf.
7. Gold Panning in Coker Creek.
8. Hiking Trails.
9. Individual group campfires upon request.
10. Camp wide Hoe Down/Barn Party with hayrides and bonfire.(Thursdays and Saturdays)
11. Hike and swim at Coker Creek Falls. (Transportation provided by group)
12. Enjoy scenic views and group time on Buck Bald Summit(Transportation provided by group)

PLEASE NOTE: If you have any questions or would like to request any changes, please contact Coker Creek Village office in writing at least (15) days prior to arrival date.

LEADERSHIP CABINS: (2 night minimum stay) \$60/per night per cabin. Total nights: 2 x \$60 = \$120. (per cabin)

There are 9 private leadership cabins subject to availability, which offer single or double occupancy. Each cabin has a porch, queen bed, sofa/bed or bunkbeds, private bath, linens, small refrigerator, microwave oven, sitting area, heat and air conditioner.

NO SMOKING. NO PETS.

***If staying with another guest please list their name _____**

BUNKHOUSE CABINS or Tent Campers: \$22/per person per night. Total nights: _____ x \$22 = _____ (per person)

Bunkhouse cabins are rented to fill each bed. For adult groups we try to fill all bottom bunks, top bunks are optional for use. All bunkhouse cabins offer bathroom facilities either inside the cabins or a shower house within a few feet of the cabins that offers separate facilities for men and women. For single guest we have Bunkhouse Cabins for men and separate cabins for women reserved for your group. We also have a limited number of bunkhouse cabins for couples and families.

Single Male _____ Single Female _____ Couple _____ Family _____ # in Family _____

MEALS:	\$10/per meal	Total Meals _____ x\$10=\$ _____
<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch (packed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch (Packed)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner	

Total Cost for Meals: _____ + Total Cost for Cabin: _____ = Total Cost: \$ _____

For self contained RV campers contact us about fees and restrictions.

Reservation Policy: \$100 Non-Refundable deposit (for Leadership Cabins), or a \$50 Non-Refundable deposit (for Bunkhouse Cabins) is required with each reservation form. The deposit per person will be applied toward your total bill. **Balance to be paid by September 1, 2018.** Please note that cabin rentals are subject to availability.

****No refunds for cancellation after October 1, 2018.**

March Work Trip

by Barry Allen

March was a tough work trip to plan and prepare – not because of the work, but rather because many other events were also scheduled that week. Our volunteers were helping out all over Georgia and Tennessee that weekend. For example, the Cherokee National Forest hosted a training session for volunteers willing to lead trail maintenance sessions in Tennessee. In Georgia, folks interested in First Aid and CPR training attended a class in Gainesville to renew or gain certification. And in Blue Ridge, the Feed Fannin campaign was in full swing – an annual event which reaches out to help those in both Fannin County, Georgia, and Polk County, Tennessee.



The work we planned for the second Saturday was on Section 11 in Tennessee. We gathered at Thunder Rock Campground to repair a bridge which had seen support for the bulkhead erode on the south end of the bridge. I'm not sure when the bridge was built over this small tributary of the Ocoee, but my guess was probably about 15 years ago. During that time, the small stream had begun to change course, and had completely undermined one end of the bridge. In fact, the stream disappears and runs underground at the site of the bridge today.

Continued next page



While there were a couple of different possibilities on the repair, my plan was to dig a trench on the south end of the bridge, jack the bridge to level -- about 18", and use the trench to slip 12 foot beams under the existing bulkhead, holding the bridge level. Once the new beams were in place in a bed of gravel, everything would be buried under about three feet of fill.

The entire group of thirteen volunteers worked for about an hour to carry new beams to the bridge site -- roughly 300 yards from the campground. Part of our task included carrying 6x6 pressure treated material over the bridge to the base of the first major ascent from the river. (In coming weeks, we will return for some repairs to the steps on this ascent.) After carrying beams, one team began digging a 12 foot long slip trench to a depth of three to four feet. Another group worked to bring gravel from the parking area to the site of the trench -- via wheelbarrow. And a final team began a hike over Hwy 64 and up the tough terrain of section 12, working with a chainsaw to remove several trees from the trail just before entering the wilderness area.



It was a wet day with on and off showers and cool temperatures making the day interesting. But everyone did their jobs and the heavy rain held off until we completed the tasks. I had hoped to have all of the work wrapped up by around 1:00; but with the rain and a bit of a lower turnout, it was closer to 2:00 before we completed. Thanks to our great volunteers -- David Blount, Bob Cowdrick, Steve Bayliss, Frank Forehand, Dave West, Steve Pruett, Dara Denning, Dale Clark, Sue Ricker, Butch Watson, and Hank Baudet. And a special thanks to new volunteer **Lynette Linn**, who drove up from the Norcross area to see what our group was all about!!

Great job -- and hope to see everyone out in April as we work Section 1.....

April Work Trip: Sections 1a and 1b

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Big Stamp Gap, Sections 1a and 1b
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, April 14, 2018
- ◆ **Meet:** 8:00 at Hardee's in East Ellijay (1208 Industrial Blvd, East Ellijay) or 9:00 at Big Stamp Gap (about one mile past parking for Springer Mtn) on Forest Service 42.
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Water diversion work, tree removal, and Spring Fun Grill.
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384

Please join us on Saturday, April 14 as we work to clean and improve 50 to 60 water diversions on Section 1; we'll also send out a saw team to remove one large blowdown from the trail about one mile south of Big Stamp Gap.

My plan for the day is to split the group into teams as we work diversions in both directions from Big Stamp Gap. This section of trail was once part of the Appalachian Trail, but after AT re-routes from years' past, has become a focal point of our trail. The wear and tear from the Appalachian Trail years has largely healed, leaving a scenic and lovely walk to Springer Mountain.

At 12:30, we will wrap up the day's work and hike back to Big Stamp Gap where the BMTA will have an appreciation Spring cook-out for our volunteers. Don't worry about bringing anything other than yourself. We'll provide the lunch for the day!

I need great turnout to finish the diversion work by lunch, so come and join us for the day. Please call or e-mail so I can plan for the right number of tools and hard hats. And for the right amount of food..... And I would love to have a few folks come just to help with cooking and serving lunch. So if your sacroiliac ain't what it used to be, then come join us any way!



Membership Report

by Darcy Douglas

We have a new Life Member!!!! Sue Harmon of Georgia Forest Watch decided to make her BMTA membership permanent this year and gave me permission to share with you. While I don't know her reasons for choosing this level of membership, one benefit is you don't have to worry anymore from one year to the next about whether you have remembered to pay your dues. A real benefit to the organization is that this money is typically set aside for larger purchases needed over time, such as a bridge or platform. These larger items are costly, and eventually need to be replaced. Thank you, Sue!!!!!!

As promised, the Corporate members who pay a higher rate for membership than regular folks are listed in the newsletter from time to time. Please note these members and offer them your business as you can!!

Historic Tapoco Lodge
Korean Alpine Club of Georgia
North Georgia Mountain Outfitters
Save Georgia's Hemlocks
Starr Mountain Outfitters
Stay Active Ellijay
Ens and Outs
Lowery and Associates Land Surveying, LLC

Backpacking at Amadahy



“Oh, No, Mabel! The Bridge is Out!”

by Dick Evans

In the more northerly reaches of the Benton MacKaye Trail (but actually less than 2/3rds of the distance from Springer), at Mile Post 163.8, a 20 foot long wooden bridge spans a drainage ditch off the Cherohala Skyway. This is between the Unicoi Overlook Parking area and Beech Gap, the Tennessee/North Carolina State Line. Originally, the drainage was fairly small, but over time the ditch had widened and the bridge fell into the pit. About six years ago Dick Evans and some friends from Robbinsville used cables and winches to raise the bridge, turn it and relocate it some 100 feet further down the hill. A short relocation of the trail was approved to use the new location.

Unfortunately, drainage from the road continues to widen the ditch and the bridge has fallen in again, even more disastrously than before. Because the under-lying issue is drainage, the decision was made to reroute the BMT along the Cherohala Skyway for 0.2 miles between the two points mentioned above until such time as the North Carolina Department of Transportation can correct the issue. In point of fact, NCDOT has identified more than 15 other locations along the Cherohala with similar issues, so the mitigation may take a major construction project. Hikers can get across the ditch at the point of the bridge but USFS and NCDOT ask hikers to avoid the area as the loose soil in the area gets damage from folks climbing up slopes, furthering the problem so signs have been posted in the area.



Boling Park/Etowah River Trails

by Howard Baggett



On Saturday, March 24, 2018, Howard Baggett led a group of 10 hikers for a seven mile hike at Boling Park in Canton, Georgia. Six of the 10 were guests and only Howard and Mike Pilvinsky had hiked there before.

We hiked the main trail, in and out, plus two loops. The weather was perfect and everyone enjoyed the hike so much that we added a ½ mile loop to the scheduled 6.5 mile hike on the way out.

Dan Owen and Boy Scout Troop 241 do wonderful work in maintaining the trail, including building two new bridges in 2017. Besides being a beautiful area, there are two trailheads and many connecting trails so you have a variety of loops to choose.

Hikers included Howard Baggett (hike leader), John Cirami, Donna and Doug Jones, Barbara Knusz, Cindy Minnick, Mike Pilvinsky, Karen Steinberg, Dawn Walters, and Karen Waters.



Do You “Hike ”or Do You “Saunter”?

Hiking

"I don't like either the word or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains - not hike! Do you know the origin of that word 'saunter'? It's a beautiful word. Away back in the Middle Ages people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, 'A la sainte terre,' 'To the Holy Land.' And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers. Now these mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, not 'hike' through them."

John Muir

Fourteen Enjoy the Third Annual Cherry Lake Two Bridges Hike

by Tom Keene

Sorry, that is not really accurate. Really it's

- ◆ Two covered bridges; and
- ◆ Five footbridges across streams, plus
- ◆ Three lakes, a
- ◆ Boardwalk, and a
- ◆ Chapel with pheasants in stained glass.

Oh, and there is also the Great Indian Rock – from which the human race sprung many eons ago. Anyway, we had a sunny early March day. It was chilly for the safety talk, but we had no wind so we warmed nicely as we walked. We had a nice delegation from the Mountain High Hikers. We took it fairly easy on the hike, enjoying the company and fresh air. Afterward many of us extended the occasion by dining at the Pink Pig.

Here's the group on the stairs across the Cherry Lake dam from that chapel.



And here we are again, this time nicely arrayed for captioning, at the Indian Rock Covered Bridge near the lake by the same name and fabulous Indian Rock itself – which is of course too sacred to be photographed!

To see it for yourself, join us for the 4th annual Cherry Lake Two Bridges Hike next spring.



Left to Right: David Schroeder, Doug Yarns, Evelyn Yarns, Tim Holby, Darcy Douglas, Paul McCord, Cheryl Karcher, Sue Ford, Ken Cissna, Ann Miller, Martha Fowler, Jane Keene and Kathy Williams. Photo: Tom Keene



BMT Shelter



Object from beyond.

Green Mountain Trail

by Hank Baudet

On Friday March 30, 14 hikers met at 10am to enjoy a mid-day hike on the Green Mountain Trail in the Aska Adventure Area of Fannin County. The weather was perfect and after departing from the Deep Gap Trailhead, we had panoramic views of both Lake Blue Ridge and the Toccoa River from overlooks on Green Mountain. After we enjoyed a snack/lunch break at an old homesite, which features the stone chimney shown in the pictures, we proceeded to the Shady Falls Trailhead where we'd left some cars. Those on the hike were: Everett Womack, Martha Fowler, Howard Baggett, Lina Prince, Nancy Sauls, Butch Watson, Paul McCord, Ken Cissna, Ralph and Teri Henning, Bill and Dianne Murphy, Russell Tully, and Hank Baudet (hike coordinator). After the hike, six of us enjoyed some great BBQ at Mike's Trackside in Blue Ridge.



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 couple of months are listed below—many of these should provide nice wildflowers; some are designed with that in mind. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

For more details, contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741

April, 2018

April 7 (Saturday) BMT Section 4a from Skeenah Gap to Payne Gap and back.

4.4 miles, moderate. An opportunity to hike with the section’s trail maintainer and amateur geologist (trail name “Rockman”) as you identify trees, flowers, birds, and rocks.

Contact Gilbert Treadwell at gilcraft AT etcmail.com or 404-660-4551

April 16 (Monday) Goforth Creek Trail.

3 miles, easy. In and out. Leisurely hike along a scenic creek.

Contact Hike Leader Hank Baudet at geezer95 AT gmail.com or 706-946-4318

April 25 (Wednesday) Lady Slipper Hike: BMT from Fall Branch Falls to Weaver Creek.

6.2 miles, moderate to strenuous. Starting on the “new” trail to Fall Branch Falls and a quick pause at the ever-popular Falls, we will continue up the BMT to our likely lunch stop atop Rocky Mountain where we should find loads of Trillium. The next section takes us past several Lady Slipper gardens, some filled with hundreds of the beautiful pink orchid. Wild Azaleas should be in bloom as well.

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

April 26 (Thursday) BMT (Sections 12-13) from Reliance to Lost Creek and back.

8 miles, easy. Creek crossing plus see Hiwassee River.

Contact Hike Leader Clare Sullivan at clare7982 AT gmail.com

Continued next page

May

May 1 (Tuesday) In the Cohuttas, starting at Dally Gap and joining the BMT at Spanish Oaks, pass Penitentiary trail intersection to Hemp Top at the remains of the old fire tower for a break before we return to Dally Gap.

About 8 miles, moderate hiking uphill first half and downhill second. About 1000' elevation change each way.

Contact Hike Leaders Tom Sewell at SewellTom AT yahoo.com or text to (706)669-6406 or Tim Holby 828-361-4205

May 2 (Wednesday) More Lady Slippers! Mulky Gap.

3.5 miles, easy to moderate.

Before embarking on the hike, hikers will go across the road to see a huge garden of thousands of Pink Lady Slippers. The hike itself begins on an old logging road. Trillium, Wild Geranium, Wild Iris and Dutchman's Pipe are just a few of the spring beauties to be seen. For the return, we'll switch to the Duncan Ridge Trail along which are Flame Azaleas as well as some super big Pink Lady Slippers.

Contact hike leader Joy Forehand at jwfbgra AT gmail.com or 706-946-0336.

May 14 (Monday) New trails – Talking Rock Nature Preserve.

Two loops, 2.8 and 1.4 miles, both easy. Option for lunch at Biguns BBQ (five minutes away) afterwards.

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741

May 23 (Wednesday) Big Frog Mt. via Big Frog Mt. Trail and BMT and return.

11-12 miles total. Moderate to strenuous difficulty uphill first half and downhill last half. Hiking time about 7 hours. Elevation change is 1300' feet (each way), starting at 2900' climbing to 4220' at the top. Beautiful views along the ridge lines.

Contact Hike Leader Tom Sewell at SewellTom AT yahoo.com or text to (706)669-6406

June

June 5 (Tuesday) BMT Dry Gap to Thunder Rock Campground on the Kimsey "Highway."

5.7 miles; moderate. Starts with an uphill $\frac{3}{4}$ mile 500 feet elevation then downhill all the way to the Ocoee River.

This is a spectacular hike mostly along a ridge. Fifteen mile shuttle. Kimsey "Highway" is a historic Indian Trail. Views at the top of the Hiwassee River Watershed are breath taking. Given the lengthy shuttle, we may do this as a "key exchange" if enough sign up for this event. The two hike leaders are willing to do the harder/uphill portion of the hike.

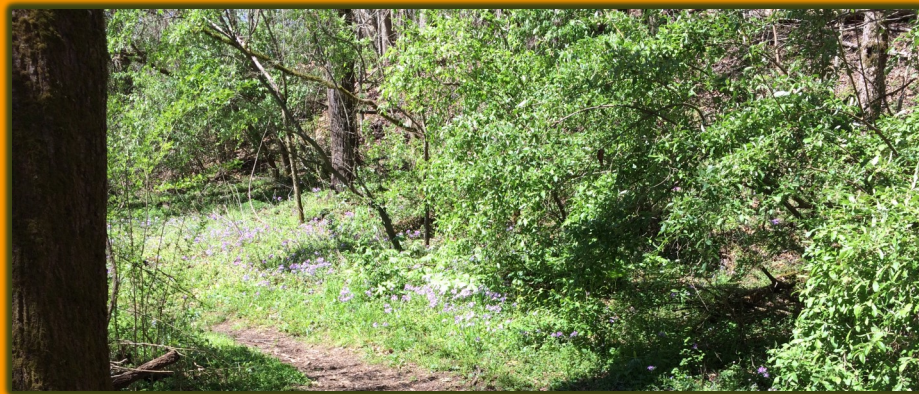
Contact Hike Leader Tom Sewell at SewellTom AT yahoo.com or text to (706)669-6406

June 15 (Friday) Lake Russell Trail.

Five mile loop, easy. Optional additional 2.7 mile loop to Nancy Town Falls (also easy).

Around beautiful Lake Russell in the 17,300 acre Lake Russell WMA near Cornelia, GA. Great scenery and abundant wildlife. We will start at Nancy Town Lake, circle Lake Russell, cross the dam, and walk through a nice campground, picnic area, and swimming beach.

Contact hike leader Clayton Webster at webs4740 AT bellsouth.net or at 404-633-8955



The deadline for the May Newsletter is May 1, 2018. Thank you!