



Points of Interest

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SEFTC Invite

Renew, Renew

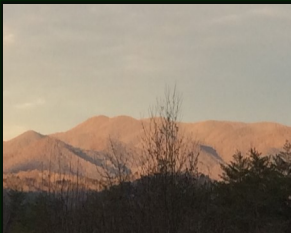
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President:	Tom Keene
Vice President:	George Owen
Secretary:	Joy Forehand
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TN/NC M/C:	Vacant
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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 35, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2018

President's Column

Missing December / TN-NC Maintenance Update Annual Meeting Mug / Back to Tapoco

The last issue of this newsletter was dated November 2017; you are reading the January 2018 edition. **What happened to December?** Basically the Board of Directors decided (with the concurrence of our esteemed Editor!) to put out the newsletter at the beginning of the named month rather than at the end of it, as we have been doing. The change allows us to cover ALL the news from the previous month's activities and to promote those of the coming month in a more timely fashion. So... no December issue. Plus, in the future look for your new BMTA newsletter Monday or Tuesday following the first full weekend of each month.

TN-NC Maintenance Update

In recent months we have devoted much discussion, both with the Forest Service and among ourselves, seeking to address the TN-NC maintenance backlog. Plans are still in the early stages, but I am pleased to report we are making useful progress on several fronts:

- **John Zardis** has agreed to keep track of work-needed reports for TN and NC, and **Barry Allen** has committed to leading his mainly Georgia crew north on occasional work trips to deal with the greatest needs.
- **Mason Boring** (Cherokee NF – Cleveland office) and **George Owen** have had encouraging communication with a student outdoors club at Lee University in Cleveland about the club's possible involvement.
- In consultation with **Ken Jones**, former BMTA board member **Bill Hodge** of SAWS (the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards) – has found funding to support a weeklong summer work crew in the so-called "Heart of Darkness" north of Sandy Gap.
- Meanwhile, **Brandon Burke** and **Ryan Farr** (FS in the Tellico and Ocoee Districts of the Cherokee NF respectively) are working to organize a work trip leadership training program for early in 2018.

- Finally **Kelly Balcarczyk** (FS Regional office in Atlanta and our speaker at BMTA's 2017 Annual Meeting) is working in consultation with **Dick Evans** to send a summer Public Lands Corps crew to attack the numerous blowdowns in the remote section between Hangover Lead and Yellowhammer Gap in the Nantahala NF in North Carolina.

So..., it's early days, but the wheels are turning. Want to help? Shoot us a note [HERE](#). Bob Ruby and the rest of our BMTA Mail Team will get it to the right people.

The Annual Meeting Mug



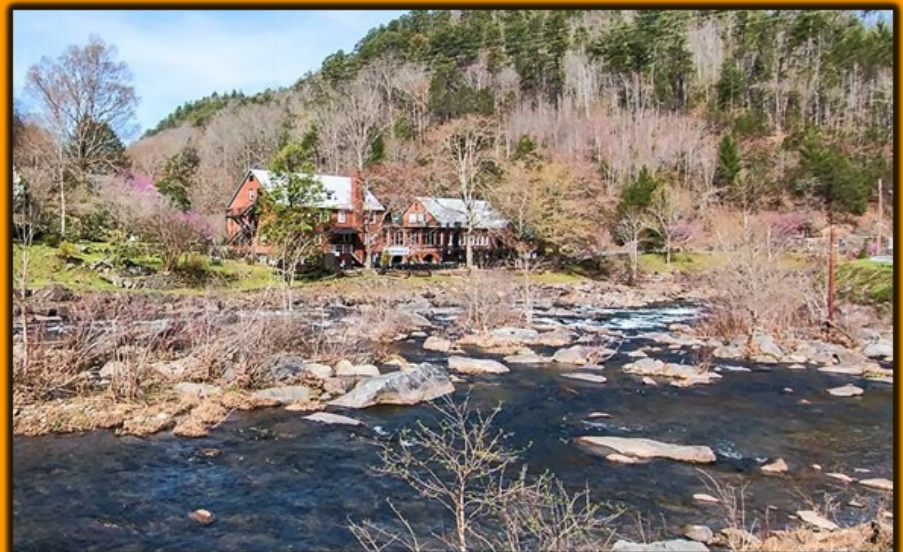
If you did not attend the 2017 Annual Meeting at Vogel State Park, you will be unaware of an important addition to the BMTA swag list -- the Annual Meeting Mug. And yes, it's a beauty.

The brain-child of **Darcy Douglas**, the handsome mugs were a big hit at the Vogel meeting. A number of the 100 Plus Hour awardees chose them as their complimentary store item. I am certainly delighted with mine (shown). By agreement with Store Manager **Ken Cissna**, the mugs will be available for purchase from Ken Cissna and Darcy Douglas at BMTA events including the Annual Meeting (another reason to come join the fun). Ken's bargain price - \$10 (cash or check only). Such a deal! Feel free to contact Ken or Darcy if you are interested. They are not available at the BMTA online store.

Back to Tapoco Lodge?



Speaking of the Annual Meeting, it looks likely that we will return to the Tapoco Lodge next fall. The lodge was a tremendous hit when we met there last year. 2018 Annual Meeting coordinator and BMTA VP **George Owen** reports that multiple people have urged him to take us back to Tapoco. The likely dates are November 2-4 with the "All Members' Meeting" returning to Saturday night, November 3. Save the dates and stay tuned for more details from George.



Invite Reminder: Annual SEFTC Smokies Hike Week, Jan 24/25

by George Owen

All BMTAers and friends are invited to the Third Annual Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC) Smokies hiking event centered at the Music Road Inn at Pigeon Forge, TN, January 24/25-28. Here are the essentials:

Go to the website: Southeasternfoottrails.org

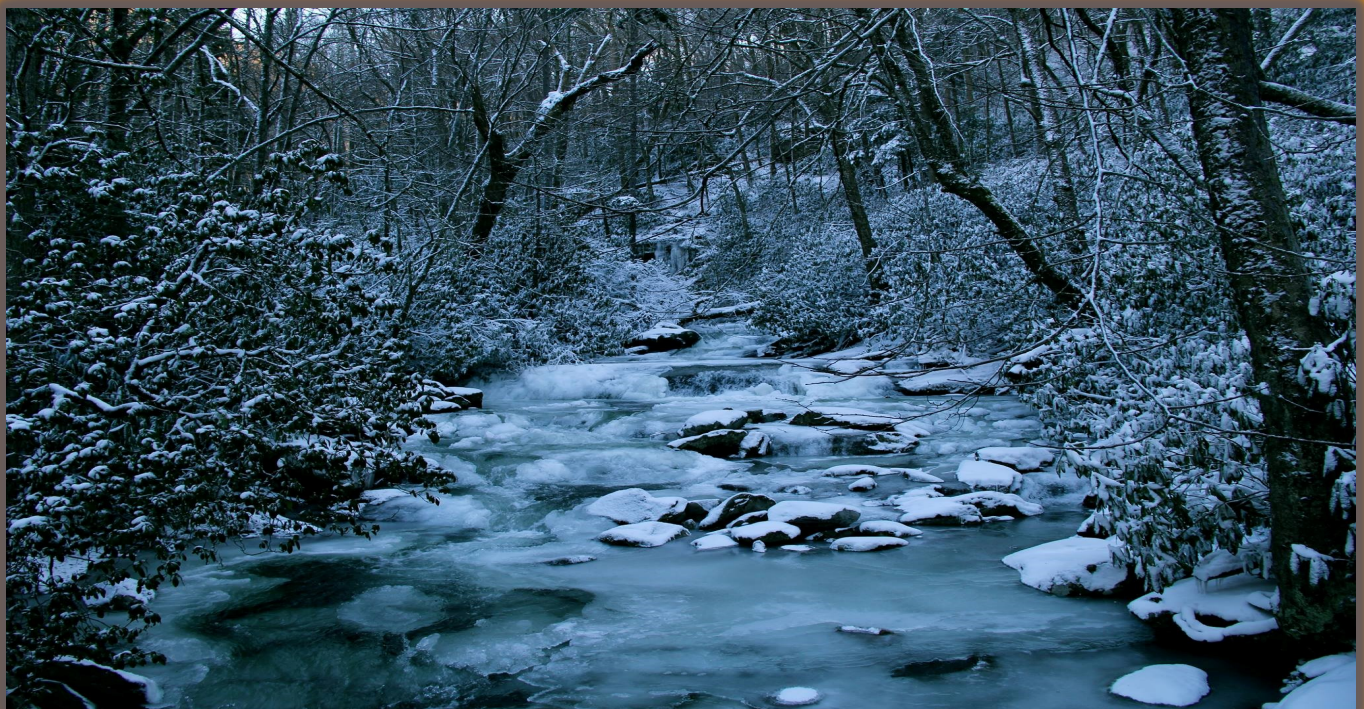
Here is located your basic information, including the daily hikes for your choice.

Registration forms are there for the required hiking fee and discounted rooms at Music Road Inn. If the Inn fills, the Music Road Hotel across the street (and owned together with the Inn) should still have rooms. The modest hiking fee finances programs of SEFTC.

Suggest you arrive January 24 (Wed.) during the day to move in and be ready for the January 25 a.m. hike. A light hike is being planned for mid-afternoon for early arrivals on the 24th.

Several of the hikes are being led by members of the BMTA!!

If you have further questions, feel free to contact BMTA Vice President George Owen at [gowen2 AT tds.net](mailto:gowen2@ATtds.net).



Membership: It's Renewal Time! Plus Our Thanks to Corporate Members

by Darcy Douglas

If you haven't renewed your dues for 2018, please do so now!

In the not too distant future, those who don't renew will no longer be receiving communications from the club such as the newsletter, nor will you have access to protections and services we are offered through our government partners. To have the privilege of maintaining your own section of trail, you need to have current membership.

So you see, it's in your best interest, especially at our low rates compared to some other groups, to just send in those dues! You can do this with PayPal on the BMTA.org website, or send a check with your written form, also accessed at bmta.org.

Big Thanks to our **CORPORATE MEMBERS**, who are listed below. They give some extra each year and I hope you will feel free to give them your business!!!

Tapoco Lodge
Mitchell Lowery - He is with a surveying company
Stay Active Ellijay
Starr Mountain Outfitters
Save Georgia's Hemlocks
Korean Alpine Club of Georgia
Ens and Outs
North Georgia Mountain Outfitters

Maintainers for 2017 Awarded BMTA Shirts

by Marge Heller



At the November Annual Meeting, trail volunteers with 30 or more hours worked on the BMT during the year were awarded red shirts. BMTA member and Sawyer Gilbert Treadwell is pictured wearing his award.

If you are interested in helping to maintain the BMT, please check the Maintainers tab on www.bmta.org for details on GA and TN/NC work trips.

This is a great way to learn new skills and hang out with the tough "Warriors of the BMTA" while taking in the best views and mountain highs!

Raven Cliff Falls

by Larry Dumas



On December 2, 2017, our group of five hikers took the Russell Scenic Highway out of Blairsville to the Raven Cliffs Falls trailhead for a six mile round-trip hike to the falls.

The trail is a slight incline up to the falls, which cascade 170 feet down between crevices. One cannot see much of the falls without moving around the rocks to change the view. This is a pretty hike along a stream with three small falls visible on the way. There is a 600-foot elevation gain but the slope was gradual over three miles.

Raven Cliff Falls is a popular hike and we met many fellow enthusiasts out enjoying the day. On the way back, we caught up with a hiker who had broken an ankle and was being carried piggyback by a companion.

Remembering my EMS training, I used my T-shirt and a triangular bandage to form a soft splint to make her more comfortable. There was no cell service on the trail, but a hiker who passed us called 911 when they reached an area that had service. With half a mile to go, we were met by EMTs with a large one-wheeled cart to take the injured hiker to the ambulance waiting at the trailhead.



Hikers, left to right: Howard Baggett, Larry Dumas, Michelle Turner and Bill Bowe. Not pictured was Dan Sweeney, photographer.

BMT Highway 60 to the Toccoa River “Brr”ridge

By Ken Cissna and Clayton Webster

Six BMTA members set out on a chilly day for a 4.24 mile hike to the famed Toccoa River Swinging Bridge, the “Jewel of the Benton MacKaye Trail.” We started from Hwy 60 after setting up a vehicle shuttle on USFS Road 816 so that our hike was one way instead of an in and out hike. Hikers included Clayton Webster, Ken Cissna (hike leader), Mark Klinefelter, Mike Pilvinsky, Kathy Williams, and John Cirami.



Kathy Williams, John Cirami, Ken Cissna, Mark Klinefelter and Mike Pilvinsky. Not pictured Clayton Webster, photographer. It's cold! Let's get this show on the "trail"!!

It was 30 degrees when we started and 31 degrees when we finished up, so it probably never reached above freezing the entire day. One week after the snowstorm it was still a pretty sight as we hiked through the woods. The snow was off the trees, but the ground still had up to three or four inches in places and for much of the day we hiked in pretty significant snow, especially when we would be on a north facing slope. The Forest Service Road for our shuttle was pretty icy in spots as well.

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As we approached the river we could hear the cascading sound of it coming up the ridge. We had not seen another hiker all day. Although there were no other cars on the FS road when we set up our shuttle, we began to see a number of “Sunday Strollers” who had driven in on the FS road and taken the short quarter mile walk down to the bridge.



Even Frosty hikes the BMT. He took a rest at this “Nature Chair!”



The "Jewel of the BMT."

Clayton told the group some of the history of the swinging bridge. It was built in 1976 and 1977 by the US Forest Service and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club because plans were being made to extend the Blue Ridge Parkway to Atlanta using primarily the route of the Appalachian Trail. The AT would then need to be rerouted. Where the swinging bridge was built was the projected route of the to-be-relocated AT. The Blue Ridge Parkway extension did not happen and the Benton MacKaye Trail Association was later formed and now uses the swinging bridge to cross the dangerous Toccoa River at a major rapid. The 270 foot long swinging bridge across the swift moving Toccoa River is the longest swinging bridge east of the Mississippi River. It is at least 20-25 feet above the river and an engineering marvel. The river was crystal clear and moving swiftly and up to the edge of the river banks. Truly a magical winter hike!!



The footing was challenging! Inches of frozen ice!



Was this gigantic blowdown from Irma?

JANUARY WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Section 6, Fall Branch Falls.
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, January 13, 2018, 9:00 AM.
- ◆ **Meet:** The Iron Bridge Café and General Store at 8:00 or Fall Branch Falls at 9:00.
- ◆ **Plan for the day:** Finish long-suffering re-route at Fall Branch Falls, clean water diversions.
- ◆ **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.

We were snowed out in December, but Fall Branch Falls is still there! We have just a few more steps to install, but we'll need to haul in another timber or two. We also have about 50' of trail to dig and just up from the falls we have a number of water diversions to spruce up for the wet months ahead.

I hope to finish the work by about 1:00 or so and send people on their way. (Rather than try to grill out for everyone as had been the plan for December, we'll plan on something in the coming months when warmer weather comes our way).



BMTA Feet to the “Foote”!

By Ken Cissna Hiking Director

Okay, folks, it is time to get signed up for one of the best hikes you’re likely to do this year: An overnight trip to **Len Foote Hike Inn**. You get two great days of hiking, a great dinner and breakfast, hot showers, and more. **Best of all it’s Half Price!**

For I don’t know how many years in a row, members of the BMTA have been able to enjoy a *half price* winter outing to the beautiful Len Foote Hike Inn, Georgia’s extraordinary backcountry lodge. Our dates this year are February 27-28. The hike is 5.1 miles, moderate difficulty. This opportunity is exclusively for BMTA members. You may invite a guest as long as he or she stays in your room (two bunkbeds per room). Only 20 rooms are available so make your reservation *now*.

For reservations, contact the Hiking Director to get the BMTA code. Then, go to <http://hike-inn.com/rates-and-reservations/>. Cost (including tax) is about \$70 for one person in a room and \$100 for two sharing a room. Their superb dinner and breakfast are included in the price. The hot showers are wonderful, and the rooms are all heated (being cold at night isn’t a problem—in fact, I’ve found you have to be careful not to set the heat too high and end up getting your room too hot).

For information about the Len Foote Hike Inn, go to <http://hike-inn.com/>. Space is limited.

For further information about our hike, contact the Hiking Director, Ken Cissna, by email at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or by calling 706-636-1741.



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 people love winter hiking best of all, with cooler weather and long distance views. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

January, 2018

January 12 (Friday) BMT Section 14a from Hwy 68 to Coker Creek and back to Hwy 68
8 miles, moderately strenuous. Lunch at Coker Creek.

Contact hike leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan at clare7982 AT gmail.com or edsulli AT gmail.com.

January 30 (Tuesday) Brush Creek Trail.

7 miles, easy-moderate. Begins at Boyd Gap overlooking the upper Ocoee River put-in and descends through pine forest and passes some low-grade coal deposits. After 2 miles the trail turns east and continues on the west side of Upper Ocoee Lake with some great views of the lake.

Contact hike leader Hank Baudet at 706-946-4318 or geezer95 AT gmail.com.

February, 2018

February 6 (Tuesday, 6:30pm) Beginning Backpacking Class.

Travis Crouch, AT and BMT section hiker and owner of North Georgia Mountain Outfitters, will conduct a class for beginning backpackers and for anyone who would like a chance to benefit from his considerable experience. He will discuss backpacking techniques, equipment options and strategies for safe and enjoyable hiking. Later in the Spring, BMTA will conduct one or more beginning overnight hikes for the “graduates” of the class.

For further information or to register for the class, contact Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741 or Travis Crouch at travis AT hikenorthgeorgia.com or 706-698-4453.

The class will be conducted at North Georgia Mountain Outfitters, 14244 Hwy 515 N, Suite 1200 Ellijay, GA 30536; 706-698-HIKE(4453), approximately three miles north of Ellijay on highway 515. See <http://www.hikenorthgeorgia.com>.

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February 7 (Wednesday) BMT Kimsey Highway from Dry Gap to Thunder Rock Campground.
5.7 miles, moderate, mostly downhill. Long shuttle. Possibility of doing a “key exchange” if enough sign up. Spectacular hike mostly along a ridge. Kimsey “Highway” is a historic Indian Trail.

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

February 17 (Saturday) Wagon Train Trail – Brasstown Bald. Co-sponsored with Georgia Forest Watch
5 miles, easy-moderate. 2 miles of gentle downhill to the overlook and back, plus up to the tower if we’re feeling like that. Besides the views, we’ll be hoping for the spectacular ice formations on the trailside cliffs (if temperatures cooperate).

Contact hike leaders Sue Harmon of GFW suepharmon AT gmail.com or 770-540-3672 or Ken Cissna of BMTA at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

February 27-28 (Tuesday-Wednesday) Overnight trip to Hike Inn.
5.1 miles, moderate each day. BMTA members only.

For more details, contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741 as well as the article on page 10 in this newsletter.

March, 2018

March 3-4 (Saturday and Sunday) Beginning Backpack Hike on Amadahy Trail.
2 miles easy each day. Camping on the shore of Carter’s Lake. A chance to put into practice what you learned at the BMTA Beginning Backpacking class in February.

Contact hike leader Mike Pilvinsky at mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com.

March 24 (Saturday) Boling Park/Etowah River.
5-7 miles, moderate. This will be mostly different trails than we enjoyed last year.

Contact hike leader Howard Baggett at howardeb AT windstream.net.

March 30 (Friday) Green Mountain Trail in Aska System Trails.
4 miles, easy, with moderate elevation gain and loss. Good views of Lake Blue Ridge. Short shuttle.

For further information, contact hike leader Hank Baudet at 706-946-4318 or Geezer95 AT gmail.com.



The February Newsletter Deadline is January 31, 2018-Thank you!!