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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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MARCH 2018

President's Column

George Owen's Delight, the Hangover, the Heart of Darkness and -- a Warning

Last month in this space we noted George Owen's oft-stated enthusiasm for simpler times, and for keeping the BMT "a solitary... backcountry experience." No crowds, no mountain bikers, no adventure races for George. We are not suggesting George is himself primitive (!). But he certainly wants to keep the trail that way. So, we are pretty confident George was delighted with a report (via the Contact BMTA link on our homepage) from hiker **Stephen Morton**: "Best quote from our Section One hike this past fall was from a solo hiker. *The BMT today is like the AT was 40 years ago.*" (My emphasis!)

Summer Work Crews in TN-NC Shaping Up

We were likewise delighted with a recent conference call organized by **Kelly Balcarczyk** of the Forest Service's Atlanta office. In addition to the BMTA, the call involved various officials from the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests and **Brenna Kelly** of the Southeast Conservation Corps (SECC). The purpose of the call was to coordinate the work of the SECC summer work crews in the two forests with the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) headed by former BMTA board member **Bill Hodge**.

The upshot is that all systems are go. In April the SAWS crew will work on a remote section of the BMT trail north of Sandy Gap, commonly known as the Heart of Darkness. Then, beginning in late May/early June, SECC crews will attack both that area and the equally remote stretch farther north, from the Hangover Ridge to Yellow Hammer Gap. These crews will be a tremendous help in dealing with the huge backlog of blowdowns and other issues in these mostly wilderness or wilderness study areas where only non-motorized tools are permitted. For the BMTA, **Ken Jones** will be coordinating with the SAWS crew and **Dick Evans** with the SECC groups.



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Blaze (Warning) of the Month

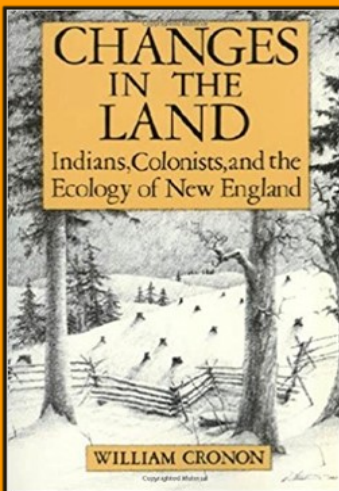
Maintainers Beware...Blaze-Drip: It can happen on your own section!



Do not show the image at left to young children. The drip of paint extending down from the tip of the BMT diamond may haunt them for years.

How could this happen? Certainly such a drip can result from applying too much paint. But in that case the painter has only to scrape away the drip and wait a moment be sure the drip does not recur. No..., this blaze-drip was almost certainly caused by a gentle mountain shower that followed too closely on the heels of our unfortunate painter. It is rather sad, but a good life lesson: A moment's inattention to one's surroundings (or to the Weather Channel) can have dreadful consequences.

Recommended Reading - William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 1983



William Cronon is one of the leading figures in American environmental history, and this slim volume is widely recognized as one of the classics in the field. It is also a fascinating read!

Changes is filled with interesting insights. Just one example: Cronon demonstrates that when European colonists arrived, New England was far from in a "state of nature." Native Americans manipulated their environment quite extensively to sustain themselves. Colonists often praised the "natural" openness of New England forests, not realizing that Native Americans regularly burned off underbrush in the forests to create more browse for game, and for better visibility when hunting. *Changes in the Land* is perhaps my all-time favorite environmental history volume. I recommend it!

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE!!!

by Darcy Douglas

April 1 is the cutoff date (no, this is not an April Fool's joke) for those who have not renewed their BMTA dues for 2018. After that, non-renewers will no longer be receiving the newsletter or other communications sent to members.

Please go to BMTA.org and use PayPal to pay your dues or print the form there at bmta.org and send it with a check to our post office box in Cherry Log.

Some of you just send checks, without the form, and we would appreciate the form so we can check our files for correct data that might not be on your check! This is especially important for your **NEW** membership person who is still getting used to this system!!

If you aren't sure you've renewed, or just have questions, please call me at 404-431-3614 or email me at bmtadarcy AT yahoo.com.

February Work Trip

by Barry Allen with photos courtesy of Ben Yaun

For our February date, I planned to work some of the private land which hosts our trail in the Cherry Log area – known as the Sisson Property. There was a good chance of a government shutdown in February, and in case you wonder what that has to do with anything, during shutdowns, the government would rather not have volunteers working in the National Forest. Since the Sisson Property is not in the National Forest, the choice of this work location was insurance against an outside disruption.

I prevailed upon Phil Guhl, Bob Cowdrick, and Dave and Sue Ricker to help out on this monthly event. I expected to be late that morning, so Phil and Bob split duties on the tailgate safety session at the Craddock Center. The turnout was great – well over 20 volunteers once again. The only problem: there was no one there who knew the roads in and out of the Sisson property. The blind leading the blind. Someone told me a number of years ago – just after I joined the BMTA – that he had hiked all over the country, but the ‘worst’ lost he had ever been was trying to drive through the Sisson Property from Hwy 515 to Lucius. The last thing I needed on a work day was to have a long line of cars snaking their way through a neighborhood with narrow, steep roads led by folks who don’t know the way.

Thinking about the work day while driving to Cherry Log that morning, it was obvious that most vehicles needed to remain in the ample parking of the Craddock Center and we needed to figure out a shuttle to points that made sense. The starting points we chose were Boardtown Rd and the Sisson Shelter, still with very limited parking. Oh well. Sometimes you just have to be lucky. The luck today was courtesy of the Ed Mobile, kindly delivered to the jobsite by one Ed Sullivan.



Once the tailgate safety was complete, we divided into two teams: Team 1 was led by Bob and Phil and tasked with working from Boardtown Road to the shelter. This team had 2.3 miles to cover, clearing water diversions and removing trees. We loaded this team into three vehicles and headed out for Boardtown Road.

Team 2 was led by Ken Cissna working from the shelter back to the Craddock Center. Team 2 needed to cover 1.7 miles, digging new tread in a few areas as well as removing an old picnic table from the trail.

When I made it back to the Craddock Center after shuttling Team 1, Ken’s group had completed tread maintenance from 515 to the Craddock Center and had begun working their way down toward the covered bridge on the Sisson Property. And that is where the Ed mobile really came through. We had to get the nine members of Team 2 from the Craddock Center to the shelter, so they could work the 1.7 miles back to their cars parked at the Craddock Center. And we had to get the 13 people who were working from Boardtown Road back to the Craddock Center at the end of the day. The conversation went something like this:

Barry: “Ed, how many people can you fit in that thing?”

Ed: “How many do you need me to fit in there?”

Barry: “Thirteen would be nice.”

Ed: “Just so happens, that is exactly how many folks with tools will fit in there”

And so it went. Nine folks shuttled to the Sisson Shelter and 13 shuttled back to the Craddock Center at the end of the day. One Vehicle. And Ed spent all morning sprucing up the shelter: cutting firewood, cleaning the fire-pit, cutting out dead trees -- a general clean-up of the shelter. It looks great.

Later on, I heard there was an incident involving a slightly stuck Ed Mobile. But if you can’t get a vehicle unstuck with 13 people carrying trail hoes, Pulaskis, chain saws, etc. – then you better look for a different line of work.



A special thanks to Ken Cissna for taking the lead on Team 2 – with no warning. And thanks to George Owen, Tom Keene and Larry Dumas for volunteering to get everything flagged and ready for the main work day.

Hope to see you all next month as we work Section 11 at Thunder Rock Campground, raising a ‘bridge over troubled water.....’

Brush Creek Trail

by Clayton Webster and Ken Cissna

Sixteen Benton MacKaye Trail Association members and guests enjoyed a great winter hike on the Brush Creek Trail on January 30, 2018. Hank Baudet was hike leader; Ed Sullivan served as sweep. We hiked about seven miles from Boyd Gap Overlook to Highway 64.



A bundled up group of BMTA hikers pose at the scenic Boyd Gap Overlook. Note the snow on the top of Big Frog Mountain in the background. Photo by Suzy Downing.

The parking lot at the Boyd Gap Overlook provides two trailheads. The Boyd Gap Trail heads to the river near the White Water Center. We went the other way, through a cut in the mountainside that exposed a seam of coal. Although the trail is used by mountain bikers as well as hikers, we saw no bikers or other hikers this day. Winter is a good time to hike this trail as there were frequent views of Ocoee Lake #3.



This is a view of Ed Sullivan's great van/limo/camper that we used to shuttle hikers to the trailhead. It has a fridge, sink, commode, flat screen TV, and seating for 13!

During our rest breaks, leader Hank would often tell one of his jokes and sweep Ed would share some information about the trail or the area around it as he lives just up the river and has studied the local history.

The trail winds around the many coves that make up the lake shoreline. The 360 acre lake has 24 miles of shoreline and stretches 11 miles from the dam back to the Ocoee River. There are four dams on the river, which is called the Toccoa River in Georgia, but changes names to the Ocoee in Tennessee. The water comes out of the bottom of Lake Blue Ridge, flows through McCaysville/Copper Hill, and enters Lake Ocoee #3. The dam for this lake was behind a mountain and not visible during our hike. From the dam, a 2.5 mile conduit/tunnel carries the water to the powerhouse. Two more dams are further downstream with the last one forming Parksville Lake, which is five times bigger than Ocoee #3.

After the hike, most of us stopped at Bradford's Fireworks and Barbecue in Copper Hill to eat supper. Ed Sullivan eats there a lot and knew all the workers. It is an unusual combination for a barbecue restaurant but the food was great. The pit master came around to make sure everyone enjoyed their meal. Their barbecue sauce selections were called regular, hot, and fire.



We ate lunch on this little spur trail with a great view of Ocoee Lake #3, which is sometimes called Hidden Lake because it is virtually inaccessible except for a Forest Service Road. Fishermen know how to get here though, but like to keep it their secret. Trip leader Hank Baudet is in the blue jacket.



Ed invited us to come on down the road to visit his beautiful home on the Ocoee River. He can (and does) put a canoe in at his back yard and paddle to Ocoee Lake #3.

Brasstown Bald Wagon Train Trail Hike

by Ken Cissna

For the second year, Sue Harmon and Ken Cissna led a jointly sponsored Georgia Forest Watch and Benton MacKaye Trail Association hike on the Wagon Train Trail. Although it runs from Brasstown Bald to the Sharp Methodist Church parking lot in Young Harris, this year we went about a third of the way down—to the second overlook—and then back. We hiked gradually downhill on the way out, getting steeper as we went, and then back up. Actually, only part of the group went that far—others started turning back at the first overlook as the weather was misty and a little chilly due to the altitude, and the trail was wet, muddy, and slippery.



Hikers in the mist!

Total distance was 3-5 miles depending on when one turned back. Though chilly, temperatures were well above freezing so there were no ice formations to see this year. Also, we had no views this year due to the fog and clouds. As the GFW permits dogs on its hike, we had two very well-behaved trail dogs in addition to 16 hikers. BMTA members were slightly outnumbered by GFW members, but only slightly, with the co-leaders members of both organizations.

Meet the Newest Board Members

By Jason Beck

Jeff DePaola, Publicity Committee Director



Jeff DePaola, the new BMTA publicity committee director, joined the Benton MacKaye Trail Association in 2015. As publicity director, DePaola stated his goals for this year are to increase public awareness of the BMT and to specifically attract more volunteers to help with trail maintenance of the Tennessee/North Carolina sections.

The Blue Ridge, Georgia native frequently participates in second Saturday work trips on the Georgia section and adopted Section 6d as a full-time maintainer about one year ago. Section 6d is the 2.9-mile section between the BMT/Stanley Gap Trail northbound split and Weaver Creek Road.

DePaola has hiked from the Springer Mountain terminus to the Georgia Hwy 515 crossing as well as several sections in the Cohutta Mountains and in Tennessee, with his favorite section being from Springer Mountain to Long Creek Falls.

DePaola's most memorable hike came just before Christmas in 2015 when he hiked from Wilscot Gap on Georgia Hwy 60 to Skenah Gap to the southernmost Hwy 60 crossing. Thinking he could easily hitchhike back to Wilscot Gap, DePaola recalled, "No such luck, as I had to walk Hwy 60 back to my car in the dark." A few days later, DePaola said, a couple of friends told him they had passed him as they were driving south on Hwy 60 and saw him walking the road. Convinced DePaola did not need help, the friends did not stop and continued toward Suches. "I wasn't happy to hear it at the time, but it makes for a better story now," DePaola said.

David Ricker, Conservation Director

David Ricker, along with his wife, Sue, first joined the Benton MacKaye Trail Association two years ago just before trading in the hustle and bustle of an Atlanta residence for the more relaxed pace of Mineral Bluff, Georgia. Ricker currently serves as the Conservation Director, and in that role, he said he hopes to continue the BMTA's coordination and interaction with the United States Forest Service (USFS). "I want to continue the great service provided by my predecessor, Pete Busscher," Ricker added.

The conservation director and his wife have hiked several sections of the BMT in Georgia as well as a section or two along Tennessee's path: "Can't say we have a favorite (Section) because the trail is dynamic: changes character with the season and offers a wide range of natural beauty."

Among his most memorable moments on the trail, Ricker cites the recent work with several Barry Allen led work teams on the steps of the Fall Branch Falls reroute as his most rewarding experience.



Continued next page

Margaret Meadows, Treasurer



Margaret Meadows first joined the BMTA in the early 2000s after meeting Darcy Douglas. She joined Douglas, along with fellow BMTA members Marty Dominy and Debbie Tuten (Meadows' sister), on an annual walk-through hike. Meadows has previously served as secretary and as a Section Maintainer. The Bostwick, Georgia resident said her goal as treasurer this year is simple: "I hope not to screw anything up."

Meadows stated her most memorable hiking experience came "not on the (BMT) but on that first outing, the annual walk thru. My sister went with Marty Dominy on a very long section and I was with Darcy. We made it back to the Pink Pig, but it was beginning to get close to dusk and there was no sign of Debbie or Marty. Luckily, I was not worried although I believe some of the others thought I was. In any event, they returned none the worse for wear."

Admittedly, Meadows said the responsibilities of being a grandmother has not afforded her much of a chance to hike many sections of the BMT, but added she hopes to change that soon: "I have really enjoyed our time on the trail and the friends we have made and hope to get back on the trail more now that my grandkids don't really need Mimi any more."

Bob Cowdrick, State Representative for Georgia



New Georgia State Representative for 2018 Bob Cowdrick is entering his fourth year with the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, first joining the Association in 2015.

Cowdrick, a resident of Lilburn, Georgia, also currently serves as a trail maintainer on Section 8a, a 2.6-mile section in the Cohuttas of Fannin County between Bushy Head Gap and Hudson Gap.

He said trail maintenance has allowed him to hike nearly all of the Georgia section of the BMT, and his favorite times on the trail come every second Saturday of the month when fellow members and volunteer workers come together on the monthly Georgia work trip.

"I truly enjoy working with a great team of trail maintainers and have learned so much from them," Cowdrick stated.

March Work Trip

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Section 11, Thunder Rock Campground.
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, March 10, 2018, 9:00 AM.
- ◆ **Meet:** The Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 or at Thunder Rock Campground on Hwy 64, just past the Ocoee Whitewater Center and behind the Ocoee #3 power plant at 9:00.
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Bridge Repair, tree removal, step install.
- ◆ **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 or 770-294-7384.

We have something for everyone on Saturday, March 10! The main job for the day will be to lift up and support a 24' footbridge which has sunk about 8" on one end. The bulkhead on the south end of this bridge has washed out and needs support to prevent further sinking. We also need to install some anti-skid strips on the bridge, since there are no handrails. And we need to replace several steps as the trail moves uphill from the Ocoee. (We'll need to carry material for the bridge repair and the step install from the parking area)

Provided we have a sawyer or two, I also plan to send a chain saw team into Section 12 to remove three trees from the trail about 0.75 miles north of Hwy 64, just before the Little Frog Wilderness Boundary. And with good weather and good attendance, we'll re-blaze this short stretch of trail up to the Wilderness Boundary.

Plan to meet the group at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 or at Thunder Rock at 9:00. We'll leave the restaurant promptly at 8:30 in order to be at Thunder Rock CG in Tennessee by 9:00. Hope you can join us for the day! I expect to be done with the day's projects by 1:00 or so, but as always, turnout is the key.



BMTA to Hike Inn:

“May the Peace of the Wilderness Be with You”

by Ken Cissna with photos courtesy of Claire Sullivan



Sixteen of us departed for a night at the Len Foote Hike Inn on the penultimate day of February, all knowing that next day we'd be walking out in the rain. But not one person cancelled because of that forecast. We all hiked in on the Hike Inn Trail and back out the same way—no one opted for the adventure of the alternative AT Approach Trail and a chance to meet some AT thru hikers just starting their journey, though I saw two small groups who were within just a quarter of a mile of the parking lot. BMTA members Mike Pilvinsky and Gilbert Treadwell hiked from Mike's home, however, in order to serve as the Hike Inn volunteers for this trip. They did a great job and received a round of applause. George Owen provided the evening's entertainment. Introduced as the “Dean” of North Georgia hiking, he told us plenty of stories and answered questions about the building of BMT in its earlier years.

Ken Cissna was there despite having been summoned for jury duty this week—Monday and Tuesday—he and all the potential jurors didn't have to appear, and he was just hoping that he (and Beth Roberts, who had said she wouldn't let him hike out alone) wouldn't have to miss breakfast and start hiking out in the dark Wednesday morning. He called in before dinner to hear the recorded message on the juror information line and then played it for all in the Sunrise Room to hear: “All jurors are dismissed for the rest of week.” As always, meals were excellent: For dinner, roast pork, glazed carrots, a wild rice mixture, salad, and rolls, and for breakfast, scrambled eggs, bacon, grits, and apple cornbread.



The Hike Inn continues to pursue eco-friendly innovation.



Perfect first day for the Peace of the Wilderness.

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. With warmer weather on the horizon you’re likely to see some wildflowers on the upcoming hikes. 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

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 9 (Friday) Sisson Property from Covered Bridge to Covered Bridge.

4 miles, easy plus (some hills); approximately two hours on the trail. Using the BMT and adjacent (mostly) dirt roads, this leisurely hike will link the two covered bridges in the Sisson’s Cherry Lake log cabin community. Besides the bridges, we will enjoy two mountain lakes and five footbridges across cascading streams. It should be sweet. Following the hike, we will repair to the Pink Pig for lunch.

Contact hike leaders Tom and Jane Keene at tkbmta AT gmail DOT com or 770-548-4935 (text ok).

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.

Continued next page

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

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

Contact Hike Leader Clare Sullivan at clare7982 AT gmail.com



The April Newsletter Deadline is March 28, 2018 — Thank you!!