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## BMTA Officers 2018-2019

President:	Barry Allen
Vice President:	Joy Forehand
Secretary:	Clare Sullivan
Treasurer:	Margaret Meadows
GA M/C:	Phil Guhl
TN/NC M/C:	John Zardis
Smokies Coord:	Larry Dumas
Hiking Director:	Ken Cissna
Store:	Ken Cissna
Membership:	Darcy Douglas
Publicity:	Jeff DePaola
Conservation:	Dave Ricker
Past President:	Tom Keene
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
State Rep GA:	Bob Cowdrick
State Rep TN/NC:	Larry Van Dyke



**BMTA Headquarters**

# Benton MacKaye Trail Association



VOLUME 35, ISSUE 11

NOVEMBER 2018

## President's Column

My 2018 Annual Meeting at Coker Creek

### Glorious Fall Color, Perfect Weather, Great Food, Three Meetings Two Hikes – and a Bonfire.

*Note to readers: This is my final column as president of the BMTA. (Actually I am no longer president as I write, but Barry let me try one more time to get it right!). It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your President. I deeply appreciate all the positive energy and hard work so many of you have contributed to this cause. I know that will continue, and more, under Barry's leadership. I look forward myself to being a useful member of Barry's team and to enjoying, for years to come, the friendship and camaraderie that is such a big part of our association.*

Our November 2-4 Annual Meeting Weekend at Coker Creek was one of best and most enjoyable in my 22-year association with the BMTA. In this edition of the newsletter George Owen, chair of the 2018 Annual Meeting Committee authored several articles with lots of interesting details about the weekend. Take a look and enjoy! What follows here is mostly my own experience at this weekend's event.

I began the day **Friday, November 2** holed up in the basement room of our cabin in Cherry Log doing some final preparation for the various weekend meetings. Then on the way to the meeting we scoped out the trailhead for the hike we were to lead on Sunday. By the time **Jane Keene** and I checked in with **Debra Guhl** at the Coker Creek Main Lodge, the day was mostly gone and light was fading fast. Friday evening was damp and chilly, but we all warmed up with an excellent dinner followed by a bonfire.

Better yet, when we awoke the next morning **Saturday, November 3** the sky had cleared entirely. We were in for two days of perfect fall weather, featuring crisp cool air and lots of sunshine on some of the best fall color I have ever experienced. The light and color show was especially impressive as we drove up the Cherohala Skyway to Mud Gap for a **Bob Ruby**-led hike up to Whigg Meadow. As we neared the 4,000 foot level on the Skyway we noticed the leaves were suddenly mostly gone and looking upward the mountaintops in every direction were covered with ice. As our group of 14 (including two in baby-carriers) headed up the trail to Whigg Meadow the sun shone through the icy treetops providing a dazzling visual show – and occasionally showering us with bits of melting ice. However, once we reached the opening for Whigg Meadow all was sunshine and glorious views.

Continued next page



Looking East from Whigg Meadow. Note the ice on the ridgeline trees. Photo: Tom Keene



Looking West from Whigg Meadow. Photo: Tom Keene

### Saturday evening was busy with:

1. A meeting of the Board of Directors, followed by the
2. Annual All-Members Meeting at which the new 2019 officers were duly elected.
3. Another hearty meal, followed by an entertaining after-dinner powerpoint lecture on the Nantahala area by local historian **Marci Spencer**.
4. The Awards Ceremony during which we:
  - Honored retiring board members **George Owen, Bob Ruby and Rick Harris**;
  - Gave special recognition to **Joy Forehand and Barry Allen**, who remain on the board but are changing jobs;
  - Presented t-shirts to a new record **63** maintainers with 30 or more recorded hours (see photo below);
  - Recognized the new Blaze Team for its good work;
  - Presented **Darcy Douglas** with the **Distinguished Service Award**, just the fifth winner in the association's 48-year history;
  - Recognized 21 maintainers with 100 hours or more (another record);
  - Named **Joy Forehand** as **Volunteer of the Year**; and...
  - Saluted **Larry Dumas** as **Maintainer of the Year**



**Sunday morning, November 4**, was another brilliant day. Jane and I were to lead a morning hike along the Hiwassee River starting at Childers Creek where the BMT coincides with the John Muir Trail. It's a beautiful section of our trail and a perfect day to be on it! We had only three sign-up for the hike, but what a winning group it was, including, in addition to long-time member **Debbie Tuten**, both the 2018 Distinguished Service Award winner **Darcy Douglas** and the 2018 Maintainer of the Year **Larry Dumas**. The hike included a mid-day lunch on the Riverside rock shown below. On the way the five of us stopped just across the river to enjoy the beautifully situated and historic Hiwassee Union Baptist Church and Masonic Lodge. It was a great way to end a super weekend.



(Left to right:) Debbie Tuten, Jane Keene, Darcy Douglas and Larry Dumas. Photo: Tom Keene



Hiwassee Union Baptist Church and Masonic Lodge (est. 1898), Reliance, TN. Photo Tom Keene

## Sights from the Hikes!

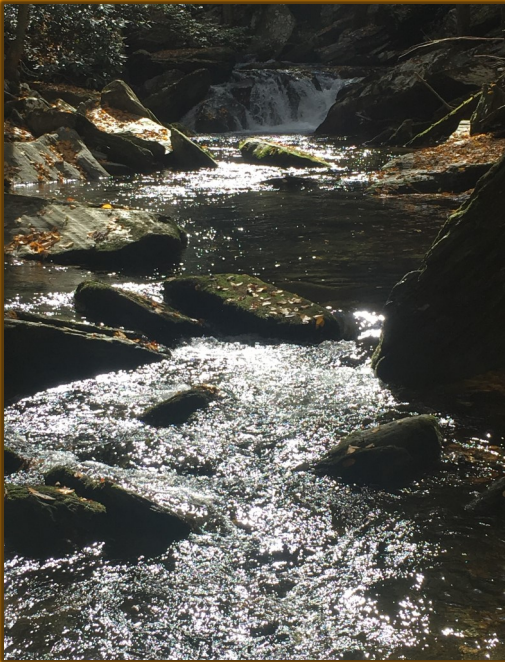
Photos courtesy of Ken Cissna, Richard Sullivan, Pam Sullivan and Clare Sullivan



Ash-leaved bushpea plant (rare)







## Annual Meeting Sets Record Wonderful Time Experienced by All

by George Owen with photos by Mike Kovitch

Our November 2-4 BMTA Annual Meeting at Coker Creek Village Retreat Center in Tennessee set a new attendance record for the big annual event. We have never previously exceeded 50 attendees at sites in either Tennessee or North Carolina. This meeting at Coker Creek we had 71 registered.

The peak of autumn color this year added to the excitement of the event - cool weather with gorgeous, bright colors, brought delighted "oohs and aahs" as we met, ate too much, enjoyed three days of hikes, held rich fellowship and slept indoors at night under a clear sky in our remote mountain setting where the Milky Way could be clearly seen, a treat for the city folks among us.

People began arriving Friday morning fairly early. Our first day's hike was an all-day one to a remote and fairly difficult hike on the Benton MacKaye Trail on the high state-line range just above Coker Creek Village. Three other hikes all left in the afternoon. Overcast skies and a little rain were occasionally experienced that day on the hikes, but everyone had great outdoor experiences in spite of that. The day was capped off by a delicious big dining hall meal at 6 p.m. followed by the discovery of just-cleared skies affording us the opportunity of a great campfire circle just for visiting and general fellowship in the outdoors on the camp's great central lawn - all provided by our wonderful host, Marylu Atchley, Coker Creek's director. Then it was off to the campground's cabins or bunkhouses, or nearby CocoBelle Lodge, for sleep.

Saturday was a full and very busy day of both pleasure and business. A series of hikes all left at 10 a.m. for various locations in the area either on the very nearby Benton MacKaye Trail or other sites. Brenda Harris also led an easy "traveling venture" for those less interested in long hikes to various sites in Tellico Plains and some short waterfall trails of interest. Two children were on this specially created feature. We all appreciate Brenda for providing this important rather new option for our annual weekend.

Later Saturday afternoon featured a social hour time in the main lodge room with Ken Cissna having the BMTA store open for sale of our association's clothes and gift items. Our guest speaker Marci Spencer had her four books available for sale and book signing. There was also a brief board meeting to deal with end-of-the-year items followed by our open BMTA Annual Meeting. Here reports were made available and President Tom Keene gave his final "State of the Trail" address. The yearly election of the board and officers was held at this time with a prepared slate presented. With no nominations from the floor the proposals were accepted and became effective immediately. Barry Allen is now our new president and Joy Forehand our new vice president. The entire board list is on the first page of the newsletter.

A big highlight of the weekend then began after dinner Saturday. At 7:00 we gathered back in the grand lodge meeting room for the evening speaker and awards. We have long been awaiting to hear and see a grand presentation by noted authority on the Southern Appalachian forests, a combined media show with speaker Marci Spencer of Old Fort, NC. She shared her knowledge of history and wonderful adventures and places in the mountains we all so love. As a member of the BMTA, she also helped share some of our own BMT history and special places. Marci has authored four books, one each on the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests and two on the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, one a children's book. She was accompanied on her visit by her retired surgeon husband, John Spencer, M.D. After her very delightful presentation the remainder of the evening was given to our awards ceremony.

Sunday morning began with packing, breakfast for the final time in the dining hall and then preparing to head homeward. Several hikes were scheduled, so folks had their final day of trail trekking as they headed out. Now about those pack lunches furnished for hikers on Saturday and Sunday: They were wonderful, and oh so filling! Many of us reported only being able to eat part of the lunch each day and then taking the rest home. The Coker Creek kitchen crew really knows how to fatten up hikers with great food!

In conclusion, I thought the weekend went wonderfully well. Apparently many others did also as I've already seen some delightful emails exclaiming how much it was enjoyed by various attendees. As chair of the BMTA 2018 Annual Meeting Committee, even I was surprised how well and smoothly events proceeded. It could not have been so without all the months of intense and constant effort by three wonderful committee members who "kept things rolling along." They are: Darcy Douglas, Debra Guhl and Rick Harris. I am so grateful to each and every one of these three for providing for you such a great weekend. THANKS, YOU THREESOME! And also I give a SPECIAL THANKS to everyone who came and made this a most memorable event in BMTA's almost 40 year history.

### *Special Thanks to Coker Creek*

*The BMTA 2018 Annual Meeting Committee and leadership of the BMTA extend our very special thanks and appreciation to Coker Creek Village Retreat Center in southeastern Tennessee for helping to make this year's BMTA Annual Meeting one of the best ever. Director MaryLu Atchley, her husband Bobby and staff graciously helped us in many ways make a transition to Coker Creek when the site we had chosen in another state became no longer feasible for us earlier this year.*

*Coker Creek was the right choice. From terrific food and exemplary effort to satisfy all taste buds to varied housing choices, we of BMTA came away very satisfied with our experience. It is no accident we chose Coker Creek - we've been there several times before over recent decades and always had a good experience. MaryLu, assistant Amy and all the staff, appeared always anxious to please us. We still visualize MaryLu building up a wonderful bonfire on Friday night for us and she and her husband surprising us when suddenly they quickly built railings for some steps needed for someone with a walking cane without our even asking for it. Delightful - and sensitive.*

*Thank you, MaryLu and staff...and thanks for you and Bobby taking membership in the BMTA at the end of our lovely stay with you.*









## Awards, Recognitions Top Off Saturday Eve at Annual Meeting

by George Owen

BMTA always concludes its big annual meeting with the awards and recognitions ceremony. Outgoing President Tom Keene initiated the awards/recognitions event by announcing a new high record number of maintenance hours by BMTAers this year: **over 5,000 hours**, near doubling our maintenance hours from 2014 to today in 2018. Work crews attendance saw record numbers this year and extra work days were even scheduled sometimes during the week, not just on Saturday. Added to that are all the hours our many individual volunteer maintainers exert traveling to/from and maintaining their assigned sections.

These **special awards** were presented:

**Distinguished Service Award**, given only three times previously in our BMTA history - to Darcy Douglas, who has around 37 years of service in many BMTA posts including the presidency.

**Volunteer of the Year** - Joy Forehand

**Trail Worker of the Year** - Larry Dumas

**Plaques for excellent service** on leaving a particular board position after multiple years for each - Tom Keene, Barry Allen and Joy Forehand.

Nineteen received a special gift award for **over 100 hours of trail maintenance/travel work**: Barry Allen, Phil Guhl, Frank Forehand, Debra Guhl, Ben Yaun, Ed Sullivan, Joy Forehand, Larry Dumas, Darcy Douglas, Dave Ricker, Bob Cowdrick, Keith Mertz, Ken Cissna, Keith Truppi, Mike Kovitch, Sue Ricker, Ken Jones, Clare Sullivan and David Blount. Two of these topped out with over three hundred hours: Barry Allen, with 343.9 hours, and Phil Guhl, with 304 hours.

Many more received their new green BMTA maintainer green T-shirts for **30 hours in maintenance/travel labors**: Barry Allen, James Anderson, Connor Bayliss, Steve Bayliss, David Blount, Ken Cissna, Dale Clark, Robert Collins, Bob Cowdrick, Diana Denning, Dara Denning, Jeff DePaola, Marty Dominy, Ellie Doughty, Darcy Douglas, Larry Dumas, Dick Evans, Frank Forehand, Joy Forehand, John Franetic, Debra Guhl, Phil Guhl, David Hagen, Kim Hainge, Brenda Harris, Rick Harris, Ralph Heller, Ken Jones, Phyllis Jones, Jim Kriner, Tom Keene, Mike Kovitch, David Lankford, Janice Lankford, Lynette Linn, Andy Meeks, Keith Mertz, Tom Mitchell, Shane Morrison, George Owen, Cary Page, Joshua Pater, Mike Pilvinsky, T.J. Pitts, Steve Pruett, Tazz Reid, Dave Ricker, Sue Ricker, Bob Ruby, Boe Rudder, Clare Sullivan, Ed Sullivan, Gilbert Treadwell, Keith Truppi, Larry Van Dyke, Ralph Van Pelt, Cindy Ward, Patrick Ward, Tina Wesson, Butch Watson, Ben Yaun, Mark Yost and John Zardis.

We also have many people with less than the 30 hours of trail work, but who are also a very important part of our effort to keep the Benton MacKaye Trail well maintained across the three states of Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina. This includes over 95 percent of our trail on public lands - in three national forests and 93 miles in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park - and a few miles on private lands or on public roads.

**WE SALUTE ALL OF YOU - AND THANK YOU!**

## MEMBERSHIP CORNER!!!!

by Darcy Douglas

### Well, it's that time of year – RENEWAL TIME!!!

If you joined recently and my letter to you said you were good through 2019, you do NOT need to renew. If you didn't do that, please send in your dues. We are on a calendar year kind of schedule but do have a little leeway if you forget with all the holiday things coming up.

Last year we sent out a couple of eblasts to members and many never received them. Please know a number of email addresses do not accept our website mailing service. You can check with your provider to be sure BMTA.org is not blocked by them. Hopefully, you'll just respond to this newsletter article and contact me should you have any questions!!!

Looking forward to all these renewals for 2019 – your membership dollars really add to the organization, especially our trail building and maintaining activities. If you join at the Corporate level, your company name will appear in the newsletter at least three times throughout the year. If you join as a Life Member, you never have to give dues a thought again! If you are short on cash, find a friend to give you a gift membership, or give one to your loved one or friend. Remember we are a 501c3 organization, too!

We hope you'll take care of this before the end of 2018, and stay on as a member of the Best Little Ole' Trail in the southeast USA!!!!

Just click here to join or renew <http://bmta.org>

## Blue Ridge Fall Arts in the Park

by the Publicity Committee



### Our BMTA Volunteers:

Hank Baudet	Cary Page
Jeff DePaola	Lina Prince
Frank Forehand	Steve Pruett
Debra Guhl	Gilbert Treadwell
Phil Guhl	Ben Yaun
Mike Kovitch	

The Benton MacKaye event tent was a popular stop for visitors at the annual Blue Ridge Fall Arts in the Park October 13-14. Booth volunteers answered a wide array of questions on hiking, trail maintenance and membership in the association. It goes without saying that the most requested topic for additional information was hiking. Thirty-three people signed up as being interested in helping with trail maintenance and 22 were interested in a BMTA membership.

Our thanks go out to our group of dedicated volunteers who made this event a success ... THANK YOU!!!

## BMTA Hikers Invade Shenandoah National Park

by Mike Pilvinsky

For the second year in a row the BMTA had an autumn presence in the Shenandoah National Park. Last year five of us hiked the southern half of the AT in the park until Tropical Storm Nate blew us off the mountain. This year we came back in October with nine hikers and completed about 80% of the AT which crosses the Skyline Drive numerous times throughout the park.



On Day 1, our Georgia and Tennessee contingent drove to Natural Bridge, VA, where we spent our first night in a campground near Interstate 81. The next day we arrived at the park and established our base camp at Matthew's Arm Campground, toward the northern end. There we were joined by Tammie Smith and Dick Evans from Robbinsville, NC. That afternoon we hiked to a fine waterfall from our camp sites. For the next five days we hiked along the AT, returning to our base camp each afternoon.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day in the park, after our hike, we moved our base camp to Big Meadows Campground and enjoyed our first showers since arriving. After making sure we were presentable, we enjoyed a great meal at the Big Meadows Lodge restaurant.



The next day we returned to our hiking routine. Again, we suffered through wonderful weather and magnificent views for the remainder of our trip. We had a terrific time and look forward to more adventures with great friends from the BMTA.

## Craddock Center to Weaver Creek

by Tom Sewell



Tom Sewell had 13 hikers join him for an easy 5.6 mile round trip hike on the BMT where the BMT crosses Hwy #515 at the Craddock Center heading east to Weaver Creek.

We started by re-filling the only free standing mini library located on the BMT. This little library was erected by Girl Scout Troop #204 from Miami, Florida. So the next time you have a few lightweight books a hiker might want to carry and read go by the Craddock Center and help the hikers by adding a book to the mini library. It's located at the end of the parking lot and on the BMT.

We crossed Hwy #515 and soon passed a fabulous iron and wooden horse sculpture along the trail. Most of the trail follows Laurel Creek along closed or active dirt roads. There are several minor creek crossings on the trail. We also encountered a local cowboy on his horse packing heat but he informed us that he's worked recently on the BMTA with the North Georgia Horsemen on trail maintenance in the Cohuttas. Our last highlight of the trip was a bear cub as we were to cross Hwy #515. The cub almost mowed down Howard Baggett, Paul McCord and Gerard Brach as it tried to cross the trail!



Front row: Clare Sullivan and GiGi Robchaud.

Back row: Fran Stoecker, Polly Warren, Jan Hitt, Marion Crabb, Howard Baggett, Paul McCord, Garad Bach, Treva Burbine, Harry Archer, Evelin Yarns and Doug Yarns.

## Tennessee Work Trip

by Darcy Douglas

Saturday, September 29, we worked on the section of BMT between Childers Creek and Big Bend Parking area. The weather was just great and 13 hardy souls showed up to saw, lop, swing blade, power weed eat, dig and create drier paths along this often wet piece of trail along the Hiwassee River.

Ralph Van Pelt, co-leader, gave our safety talk, after which Barry described the work to be done. Due to recent rains the puddles were rather large! Some digging was done to provide better drainage, rocks were moved to create a path above one puddle and a somewhat creative approach was used at the wee lake. Everyone worked hard! We left the trail section in need of some more work but definitely better than when we arrived. We understood a group would be hiking there after we left to help celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hiwassee River Park – hopefully they found it open and clear! We may return to finish our work on the October trip – that remains to be seen. Everyone helped clean the tools and enjoyed some cookies and refreshing drinks at the end.

We then dined at the Flip Flop Burger nearby – it was unanimous that the place is great and deserves another visit. They cater to hikers, providing food shopping opportunities for them as well as quick, good food. Thank you to each one of you who worked today, especially our first timer John!!!

Participants were Barry Allen, John Budka (first timer), Jack Callahan, Darcy Douglas, Debra Guhl, Phil Guhl, Brenda Harris, Rick Harris, Boe Rudder, Cynthia Tehan, Ralph Van Pelt, Ben Yaun and John Zardis.



Photo courtesy of Mike Pilvinsky

## Fifteen Take the Patterson Ridge Plunge SAE Contingent Steps Up

by Tom Keene

Truth be told the day was not promising. Rain was predicted for Friday morning, September 28. But, crucially, the rain was described as “scattered showers.” So we decided to go ahead with the hike. Amazingly all 15 folks who registered for the hike appeared at the Sissons’ lower parking lot as scheduled. It soon developed that many of our number were enthusiastic members of Stay Active Ellijay, which they all referred to as “SAE.” For a time I was amazed at how “mature” these fraternity kids were! Eventually someone explained... Most of the SAEs knew one another already and the conversation flowed freely. Hike Director Ken “Bargain Barn” Cissna joined the group.

After the short drive to Patterson Ridge, we assembled for the mile-long downhill to Boardtown Road, with multiple stops to admire the galax, creeping cedar and various moss coverings in the cove at close range. Following a short break just above Boardtown Road we headed back up the hill. The rain held off entirely and we had a delightful hike.

Once back on Patterson Ridge, most joined the caravan up 515/76 to Blue Jeans Pizza in Blue Ridge, where a tasty lunch – and lots more conversation was enjoyed by all.



Left to right: Joanne Bennet, Bob Bennet, Jane Keene, Cindy Minick, Harry Archer, Sharon Atchison, Tom Atchison, Jan Hitt Debra Tew, Ken Cissna, Andy Meeks and Treva Burbine. Photo by Gigi RoBichaud.



## October Tennessee Work Trip

by Darcy Douglas with photos courtesy of Debra Guhl

On a rainy, chilly October 27, seven intrepid Benton MacKaye Trail Association members from Georgia worked their way to Reliance, Tennessee, to make every attempt to complete the work begun last month on this section of trail along the Hiwassee River.



“The Intrepids”



Four of us took two Nuclear Weed Eaters, a lopper and a swing blade back to the large rocks, then worked our way back to the cars.

We had hoped by seeing the work to be done, we would be more successful gauging our work time and that the rain would be stopped by the time we began actual work. The rain part worked, but not the other.

At least by virtue of our work plan choice, we were able to get the areas furthest from the trail head so that someone finishing up has much less territory to cover (we walked about 1.5 miles each way, I was told).

We worked until we ran out of fuel for the equipment and for ourselves!!

Continued next page



Barry and the Guhls (great name for Halloween time, plus it sounds like a band name!!) went to Towee Creek to cut the six trees which magically changed to 11!

Afterward, six of us went to re-fuel ourselves at Flip-Flop Burgers, a hiker haven with showers, bunks and a big plus, food! We learned later BMTA member Kim Murrell was there too, volunteering for their special event. Since it was still pretty cold and dreary we stayed inside and missed her! Yes, there were cookies, Halloween candy and refreshing drinks for those who came to work...some of you missed out on those goodies!!!! Maybe next time????

A huge **thanks** to all those who worked so hard this rainy October day!!!!!!

Workers were: Barry Allen, John Cirami, Dale Clark, Darcy Douglas, Debra Guhl, Phil Guhl and Ralph Van Pelt.

# BMTA at the Etowah Arts and Crafts Fall Festival

by Rick Harris with photos courtesy of Brenda Harris

The weekend of October 6 and 7 the BMTA participated in the Etowah Arts and Crafts Fall Festival. The BMTA booth was in a great location, on the main walkway right by the highway, thanks to Ruth Pannell who made the arrangements. This annual festival was well attended, especially on Saturday. Many folks stopped by asking about the BMT and hiking in the area and several showed an interest in trail maintenance. The weather was sunny, but unusually hot for this time of the year. Those who answered questions for the visitors attending the fair were Ruth and Clayton Pannell, Rick and Brenda Harris, Carol and Carroll Guhne, and Joanne Jackson on Saturday, all members of the Cherokee Hiking Club (CHC). They also provided folks with information on the activities of the CHC and handed out literature for both the BMTA and the CHC. On Sunday we were joined by Phil and Debra Guhl, who also helped us take down the tent and they trucked it back to Georgia.



Carroll and Carol Guhne, Clayton and Ruth Pannell, and Rick Harris.



Great location and weather!

In all, the event was well attended and a success for both the BMTA and the Cherokee Hiking Club. Ruth signed us up for next year, guaranteeing that we would get the same site.

## ORANGE UP AND SUPPORT THE BMTA!

### It is hunting season!

### Be safe!

Wear orange that you can buy from our store [www.bmta.org/Store-Clothing.html](http://www.bmta.org/Store-Clothing.html).

# Cherohala Skyway Festival

by Richard Harris with photos courtesy of Brenda Harris and Richard Harris

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association had an interactive booth at the very successful Cherohala Skyway Festival on Saturday, October 27. The festival was very well attended in spite of the cold gloomy weather. The festival consisted of numerous craft and food booths, live bluegrass and folk music, and several interactive booths such as the crosscut sawing at our booth and corn grinding, bee keeping and hay rides.



The BMTA booth was very popular, especially with dozens of kids who wanted to try their hand with the crosscut saw. Many grownup "kids" also gave it a try. Even Smokey the Bear pulled the crosscut, since he knows how vital trails are to the forest.



Many folks learned about the BMTA and what it takes to maintain the trails and several folks indicated interest in membership, hikes and trail maintenance.

In addition to handing out information on the BMTA, we also put in plugs for the Cherokee Hiking Club and handed out CHC and BMTA cards with how to access the clubs' websites, Facebook pages and Meetup page.

Thanks to Rick and Brenda Harris, Clare and Ed Sullivan, Jeff DePaola and Ben Yaun for helping (wo)man the booth.

Rick, Brenda, Clare and Ed represented both the BMTA and the CHC. Jeff and Ben represented the BMTA.

The festival was a big success overall and we undoubtedly will make a return appearance next year, and the next, and next!!

## October Work Trip

by Barry Allen

And then it was over.

Yes, folks, after a bit over four years, my tenure as Maintenance Director came to an end on the second Saturday in October. We ended with a bang – a saw team led by Mark Yost into Section 9, Bob Cowdrick taking a group into Holloway Gap on Section 8, Ken Cissna leading a bunch into Double Hogpen Gap below Flat Top Mountain and Tom Sewell lopping his way toward Dyer Gap. Still, it was a bittersweet day for me. The past few years have been a rewarding chapter in my life; it was hard to unload the tools at the work center on Saturday evening as the day drew to a close. But it was also nice to pass the reins to someone I knew was capable of serving as a better director for the association.

Rather than writing a story about the day, as I have so many times in the past, I'd like to say thanks to a few people who have been such a big part of my time on the trail.

First, thanks to Mr. George Owen, who was the leader of my first work trip on the Benton MacKaye. George has been a wealth of knowledge about the trail and the people who built the association. And he has been a constant volunteer, even in his 80's. Thanks to Darcy Douglas who, along with a misguided search committee, saw fit to ask me to serve as Director back in 2014. I think I was probably their third choice and the first one to say "yes". During the past four years, Darcy has been one of the most faithful attendees of our work events; she taught me a very important lesson: learn your volunteers. Not everyone can or should do every task, so let them work to their strengths. And chocolate chip cookies can do wonders.

Thanks to Tom Keene who taught me the basics: scouting and flagging for the trip, planning for more people than you may expect and taking care of the tools. Most importantly, through his actions and words, Tom reminds us all that we are volunteers, that there is no reason to EVER get upset or utter a harsh word on the trail. And don't assume that people know what to do: show them.

Thanks to Ken Jones and Rick Harris who continue to show me how far a passion for the trails can push an individual. Passion is the only thing that explains the actions of these two men, doing what they have done for many long years with limited help in remote and physically demanding locations. I am in awe.

Thanks to the people who set the second Saturday aside to help on the trail: especially Phil and Debra Guhl, Bob Cowdrick, Ken Cissna, Frank Forehand, Dave and Sue Ricker – these volunteers rarely miss a work day. Thanks to other volunteers who come out more often than not. Thanks to Thomas Mitchell who always has the tools sharp, oiled and ready to go on Saturday. Thanks to Ralph Heller who takes so much off my shoulders and does such a great job with outreach in the search for new volunteers. Finally, thanks to all of you who come out and support when you are able. I realize time is precious; I also know that everyone is important in our efforts to maintain 300 miles of trail. I appreciate each and every volunteer, whether it is once a month, once a quarter or once a year. Thanks for the four years.

Now, as my old high school ball coach used to say – buckle up those hard hats, men. The game is about to begin!

Barry Allen



## November 17 Tennessee North Carolina Work Trip

By Rick Harris

This month the Tennessee/North Carolina work trip will be on Section 18, Beech Gap to Haeo Lead Trail over Bob Bald Saturday, November 17, in an effort to avoid the conflicts of Thanksgiving. Rick Harris is the leader this with Dick Evans serving as the co-lead; plan to give them some great support.

This section of trail was surveyed a couple of months ago by Josh Pater and TJ Pitts, who ran the area after a work event on Section 17. TJ and Josh noted a number of the issues we will attempt to fix. Rick and Brenda Harris have scouted the area more recently in preparation for a work crew.

For Georgia workers wishing to carpool to the Cherohala Visitor Center, please be at the Blue Ridge Home Depot by 7:15. We'll drive to the Visitor Center in Tellico Plains, arriving by 8:15 and on to Beech Gap by about 9:00. Georgia Volunteers -- Please let Phil or myself know your plans for attendance, so we can gather the right tools and prepare for the car pool. Tennessee volunteers -- Cherohala Visitor Center, 8:15.

Folks, this is a section that definitely needs some help from the GA folks in addition to the TN and NC folks. There is a lot of lopping and brushing out to do. This section has received a few comments by thru-hikers about all the briars from Bob Bald to the intersection with the Haeo Lead Trail. So here are the plans:

Dick Evans along with the Nantahala forest service folks are going to the bald by 4-wheeler on Friday, Nov. 16 with the new signs, a couple of brush cutters and a chain saw. They plan to install the signs and then use the chain saw to clear five or six trees which are down on the trail. There are three or so trees heading north and two or three trees heading south. In the southern direction toward Beech Gap there is a particularly complicated huge tree that the NC crew will take care of, or reroute the trail a few feet around it. Dick Evans will camp out on the bald to protect the gear and to save himself another hard hike back up to the bald on Saturday morning. The FS folks will return to Robbinsville on Friday night via their 4-wheeler.

On Saturday four or so NC folks will come in via the Wolf Laurel Trail on the NC side to help with brush cutting between the bald and the Haeo Lead Trail intersection. The TN and GA folks will meet at Beech Gap on the Skyway at the TN/NC line at 9 AM, or behind the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center in Tellico at 8:15 AM to carpool to the gap. We will need one chain saw to clear trees off the road/trail between Beech Gap and Cold Springs Gap as we drive in to Cold Springs Gap. Then we will leave the chainsaw behind in the truck. We will carry loppers, handsaws and brush cutters uphill from Cold Springs Gap to Bob Bald, a distance of about two miles, working the trail as we go. This is a 900 foot climb in these two miles. There is a lot of lopping and brush cutting needed but we should be able to make it to the bald by 1 PM or so. Then we can help out the crew up there with the brushing they will be working on if they have not finished yet. It would be fun for all of us to eat lunch together up on the bald, but we will see how things go timewise. We need to do some brushing out on the bald itself to clear a better corridor through the grass and shrubs. Once done, we will head back down to our vehicles at Cold Springs Gap.

Then we will stop in Tellico for supper at either Tellicafe or the Mexican restaurant. So, bring your day pack, water, lunch, your PPE and a brushcutter if you have one. We need one person to volunteer to bring a chainsaw. We will have loppers etc. available. Bring some money for dinner as well down in Tellico Plains. Let Phil Guhl (pguhl AT guhlspc.com) or Rick Harris (HarrisRi AT aol.com) know if you are coming.

**Mark your calendars for the next TN/NC work trip on December 15.** We will work the section between where we stopped on the Dry Pond Lead Trail to Lost Creek Campground.

## 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](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. Definitely into Fall now with Winter approaching—cooler weather and great long-distance views! More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

### November

**November 17** (Wednesday) Amadahy Trail at Woodring Branch Park on north shore of Carter’s Lake. 5 miles, easy to moderate.

Contact hike leader Howard Baggett at [howardeb AT windstream.net](mailto:howardeb@windstream.net)

**November 23** (Friday) BMT in the Cohuttas #1: Bushy Head Gap to Hudson Gap and return. 5.2 miles, moderate, 500’ elevation change each way. Beautiful ridge hike.

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

### December

**December 7** (Friday) Stanley Gap Trail from Deep Gap off Aska Road to intersection with BMT, and back. About 5 miles, moderate.

Contact hike leader Evelin Yarns at [eyarns AT sprynet.com](mailto:eyarns@sprynet.com)

**December 17** (Monday) BMT in the Cohuttas #2: Hudson Gap to Fowler Mt. and return. 7.6 miles, moderate, about 700’ elevation change each way. Beautiful ridge hike.

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

**Hike Inn Half Price for BMTA Members  
February 27th through the 28th  
Contact Ken Cissna at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu)**

**The deadline for the December Newsletter is Sunday November 25. Thank you!**