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**BMTA Headquarters**

# Benton MacKaye Trail Association



VOLUME 36, ISSUE 4

APRIL 2019

## President's Column

**“The ultimate purpose?**

**There are three things: to walk, to see and to see what you see.”**

**Benton MacKaye**

This quote was taken from Benton MacKaye a bit later in life when pondering wilderness and the trail for which he is so well know – the Appalachian Trail. MacKaye goes on to say that he would be completely unconcerned with awards given to someone who hiked the trail in a fast time. Quite the opposite: MacKaye would be more apt to give recognition to someone who hiked the trail in the *slowest* time. I guess he felt the trail was there to bring people into the wilderness, to let them experience things which had disappeared from the lives of many and to let them examine and reflect on their own life, away from the crowds of the eastern cities. To SEE what you see – but to take your time doing it!

There is constant evolution and change in everything we are involved with: work, family, community, and certainly with the trail. I doubt Benton MacKaye could have envisioned things like the Georgia Death Race – an endurance race that utilizes several miles of the BMT each spring. As he made clear, he did not care much about converting a walk in the wilderness into a speed competition. But MacKaye certainly lived long enough to see the Forest Service struggle with the needs of an ever-growing user base. When MacKaye passed away at the age of 96 in 1975, the BMT did not exist. But traffic on the Appalachian Trail was beginning to increase quickly. I have heard many folks say that today's BMT is reminiscent of the AT in its earlier days. I don't know. But I do know that growing the recognition of our trail is important. We need more traffic on the trail. A trail needs to feel like a path that is walked and loved. Not something that feels like it is falling into disuse.

I think our maintenance directors and volunteers are doing an outstanding job of improving the quality of the trail and making hikes more inviting to the public. While as yet we have no clear way of tracking users on the BMT, my sense is that traffic is up slightly. I notice more hikers while out on work trips or scouting trips. I truly believe that festival outreach is helping, as is all of the other outreach in which we are involved.

**I would like to hear from our members on this subject. What is your sense of trail use? Are you seeing more hikers or are the numbers not really changing? Are we beginning to increase the stature of the trail?**

A couple of nods to our volunteers: we had over 20 volunteers for both the Georgia and the Tennessee work trips in March. In Tennessee, this allowed the group to log out an additional mile of trail, ending up with 3.5 miles of trail cleared on Section 12. And in Georgia, the group size was the only reason we were able to complete the work of cleaning over 60 water diversions on Section 3 and digging two culverts into the trail to redirect water flow from seeps. Phil Guhl scheduled a BONUS trip at the end of the month and was able to collect 15 volunteers to man four crosscut saw teams working south from Thunder Rock in Tennessee toward Big Frog. This area is burdened with a high population of dead and dying hemlocks, so the need will be constant for some years to come. We may need to do an overnight backpack trip to clear Big Frog itself, so let us know if you may be interested in an overnight work trip.

I would also like to thank the folks who participated in outreach during the month. I'm not going to list all of the names, because I would surely miss someone. But thanks for the REI outreach and the festival attendance (Mike, Ken, Carolyn, Larry, Ralph, Joy, et al).

Finally, I'd like for members to put June 1 on their calendar. This year, we are celebrating National Trails Day in Vogel once again. I'd like to use this as an opportunity to get our group together for a mid-year social and for a bit of hiking and a bit of trail work for those interested. (*I also hear there is a cross-cut saw competition which I hope will be won by a pair of our sawyers!*). See the notices included in the Newsletter for more information.

'Til next month.....

## Tennessee Work Trip

by John Zardis

- ◆ When: April 27, 2019
- ◆ Where: Section 18a between Beech Gap and Haeo intersection.
- ◆ Task at hand: Tree clearing of 11 decent sized blowdowns and 30+ throw off/hand saw type trees to clear.
- ◆ Contact: John Zardis at [John.Zardis AT migllc.com](mailto:John.Zardis AT migllc.com)



Don't miss the fun!! See you then!





## Join the prestigious **100 Hour Club**

Earn 100 hours or more working on trail or by  
volunteering at a BMTA festival booth.



The 100 Hour Club Jacket will be awarded  
at BMTA's 2019 Annual Meeting (November 1-3).

**Make Your Reservations Now!**

**Fontana Village - North Carolina**

For reservations call (828) 498-2211.

To receive your discount -

**Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!**



Celebrate Trout Fishing in the Trout Capital of Georgia ...

## 4th Annual Blue Ridge Trout Festival & Outdoor Adventures!

Located just 90 minutes north of Atlanta and 90 minutes from Chattanooga, the Blue Ridge Trout Festival & Outdoor Adventures event combines trout fishing and outdoor recreation in the historic district of Georgia's Blue Ridge and the Trout Capital of Georgia.

Enjoy more than 70 adventure outfitters, local fishing guides, fishing gear, fly-tying, fly-fishing instruction, fishing seminars, conservation information, lodging services, home decor and gifts, fine arts, outdoor clothing/gear ... not to mention our amazing Food Truck Alley and Beer Garden!



Designated in 2016 by State Legislature as the **Official Trout Festival of Georgia**.

Presented by Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited Chapter 696 and the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce, the festival benefits cold-water fisheries conservation in North Georgia.

**When:** 10 am to 5 pm, Saturday, April 27, 2019

**Where:** Downtown City Park in historic Blue Ridge, Georgia

**Contact:**

- Event Coordinator/Communications: Bob Borgwat, 706-838-5259
- Event Sponsorships: Sam Miller, 404-580-4121
- Event Volunteers: Jim Reich, 404-423-7622
- Email: [BlueRidgeTroutFest@gmail.com](mailto:BlueRidgeTroutFest@gmail.com)
- Website: [BlueRidgeTroutFest.com](http://BlueRidgeTroutFest.com)



**About Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited Chapter 696**

BRMTU is the official local chapter, in Blue Ridge, Georgia, of the acclaimed national organization to cold-water fisheries. TU is dedicated to protecting critical habitat, reconnecting degraded waterways, and restoring populations to cold-water fisheries. All funds raised or donated to BRMTU are applied right here in the North Georgia mountains for conservation and stream restoration efforts; stream cleanups, such as Rivers Alive; and education and outreach programs. Sponsored programs include Trout in the Classroom in local schools, the Trout Adventure Trail, Boy Scout and Girl Scout conservation education, Project Healing

Waters for wounded veterans, Casting for Recovery for breast-cancer survivors, Georgia Trout Camp, and Mercier Orchard Family Fishing Days. For more information, please visit [BlueRidgeTU.com](http://BlueRidgeTU.com).

Event sponsored by ...





## BMTA Participates at the AT Kickoff

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association's booth was at the AT Kickoff at Amicalola Falls on March 1 – 3. This event signifies the beginning of the hiking season. It puts the spotlight on the early bird hikers who will be thru hiking the Appalachian Trail ... a total of 2,181 miles from Georgia to Maine.



Our booth was extremely busy with many people stopping by to say they are planning to thru hike the Benton MacKaye Trail this year!

Hiking once again was the most popular area of interest with 20 attendees signing up for more information. Fifteen signed up for maintenance and 12 for membership.

On Sunday, 15 people attended Larry Dumas' presentation on "The Least Used Trail."

Of course, we couldn't do this without our volunteers. Our thanks go out to Ben Yaun, Frank Forehand, Sue Ricker and Dave Ricker. A special thanks go to our dedicated volunteers who had to endure the heavy rain storms on Sunday morning ... Hank Baudet, Lina Prince, Jeff DePaola and Larry Dumas!

# APRIL GEORGIA WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

by Phil Guhl

- ◆ **Work site:** Section 4a (Skeenah Gap to Payne Gap).
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, April 13, 2019.
- ◆ **Meet:** 08:00 AM at the Village Restaurant (4131 East 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Blue Ridge, GA 30513) or 9:00 AM at Skeenah Gap Trailhead.
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Water Diversions plus a little trimming...
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snacks.
- ◆ **Contact:** Phil Guhl at pguhl AT guhlspace.com or 770-548-5590 (Please RSVP so we can plan on the number of tools, helmets, and people for the food/drink afterwards).

The Tour of Georgia continues in April. We will be working on Section 4a. There is a Maintainer in Training for this section, so you can think of it as cleaning the place up so he can move in. My plan for the day may change a little depending on the number of volunteers we get....

At this time, we will have one team cleaning and installing water diversions in addition to de-berming. A second team will be lopping and clearing various areas, especially the Mountain Laurel near Payne Gap. The final logistics (out and back, through hike, start from both ends, etc.) will be based on the number of volunteers.

*IF* we get enough volunteers, we will have a crew (six people in good shape) head to Dally Gap to clear and crosscut the trail from Doublespring Gap up to the top of Big Frog Mountain. This will be a challenging objective. The most recent reports have four large trees down on Big Frog, plus quite a bit of handsaw work before sawing starts.

**Hope to see you then!**





## Len Foote Hike Inn

by Clare Sullivan with photos by Brenda Harris and Ed Sullivan

February 27, 2019, was special rate night for the BMTA at Georgia's back country Len Foote Hike Inn. We had 19 in our group who enjoyed the five mile hike to the Inn. Brenda and Rick Harris went a day early and added a hike to Springer Mountain and back the day we arrived. Luckily, we hiked up on one of February's few dry days. The morning was foggy, but the sun began to break through and we had beautiful views of the surrounding mountain ranges that afternoon.



Continued next page





Debbie Crowder and Clare Sullivan added the 604 steps up beautiful Amicalola Falls to their trek!



Nothing like the porch!



Bring on the chow!

After hot solar showers, we socialized in and around the Sunrise Room where there are puzzles, games, books and terrific people sharing stories.



Hikers new to the Hike Inn enjoyed the 5 p.m. tour with one of the two staff “naturalists.” They got a firsthand look at the composting toilets and saw the energetic wiggler worms eating kitchen scraps—zero food waste. Seventy percent of the Inn’s energy is from solar, greatly reducing its carbon footprint.



The naturalist also gave an interesting evening program on the history and mythology of the Orion Constellation. It is one of the most recognizable constellations in the night sky this time of year. Following the program, we walked outside and were fortunate that the skies had cleared enough to view it near the horizon in the southeast skies. We were honored to have BMTA members Mike Pilvinsky and Ken Cissna serving as kitchen volunteers for our meals. They stayed a second night and served as volunteers for the Over the Hill Hiking Group as well.



Front Row: Elise Howell, Anne Anderson, Debbie Crowder, Tammy Watson, Hiroko Schecter and Brenda Harris.  
Second Row: Hank Baudet, Ken Cissna, Beth Roberts, Steve Pruet, Ed Sullivan, Butch Watson, Lina Prince and Mike Banick.  
Third Row: Rick Harris, Clare Sullivan and Mike Pilvinsky.

Our hike down occurred on another of February's misty rainy days. During our hike we met several hikers who were starting their 2,189 mile thru hike on the Appalachian Trail. A few were already having complications before their real hike had even started—in fact, a mother and son duo spent the night with us at Hike Inn and returned to the Visitors' Center as our group was also hiking out.

**A happy time was had by all!**

## “Looking for Pogo!”

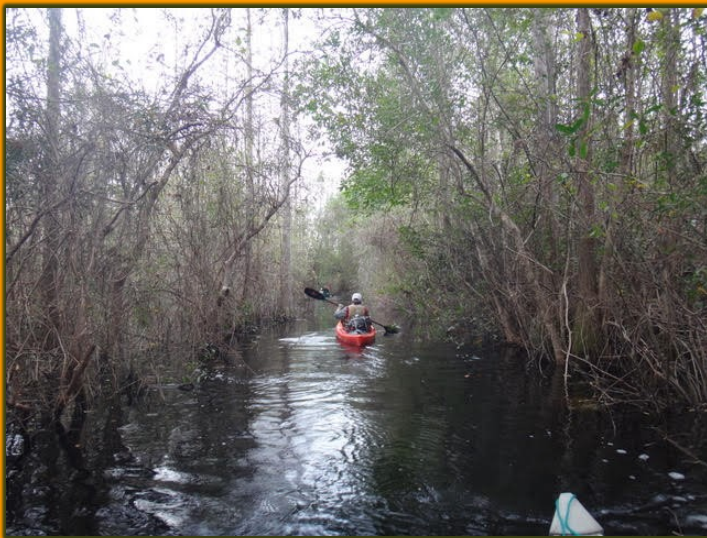
by Mike Pilvinsky

Some of you may remember one of my favorite cartoons back when we kids looked forward to the Sunday papers...almost a thing of the past now days. It was Pogo. A comic strip devoted to the residents of the Okefenokee Swamp. Pogo happened to be a possum and the main character. Well, Dick Evans remembered that comic strip and presented each of the seven BMTA members on our 2019 Okefenokee Adventure embroidered baseball hats with a likeness of Pogo on the front and “We have met the enemy and he is us!” on the back. That pretty much describes our adventure in that 400,000 acre wilderness.

Dick and I paddled the swamp several years ago and had a great time. Since then, several friends asked about joining us on another swamp adventure. So I began planning last fall and despite some roadblocks caused by the federal government shut down, we began our trip in late February. I always choose January or February for our swamp trips to avoid the mosquitos, but they must have discovered my scheme and were waiting for us at dawn and dusk every day.

Access to the inner swamp is very restricted and once a permit is obtained you must follow a strict itinerary and can remain only one night at each camp site. Camping there means sleeping on wooden platforms, except at Floyd’s Island.

On day one we headed south on the Suwannee River and soon turned upstream into the middle fork of the Suwannee, paddling toward Floyd’s Island. After a few miles, the canoe trail narrowed considerably and we were faced with difficult paddling for the last four miles due to the narrow twisting channel and encroaching vegetation. Throughout our four day paddle we saw many alligators but few wading birds, which Bob Brown attributed to the abnormally high water levels. That afternoon we arrived safely at Floyd’s Island and set up our tents among the tall pines. I had hoped we could stay in the 100 year old Floyd’s Cabin but a giant tree had fallen and demolished half of the cabin a few weeks earlier.



Bob Brown paddling up stream along a narrow canoe trail.



Bob Brown named this scene, “The eye of the swamp”.



Our second day began with a short portage across Floyd's Island and several more miles of difficult paddling. Our party consisted of two kayaks, two canoes, and a one man canoe. By noon we had entered Chase Prairie, a vast open area with few landmarks to guide you. Although paddling was easier (until the wind picked up,) navigation was much more difficult. Thanks to the awesome skills of "Ranger" Dick Evans, we arrived at our day's destination, Round Top platform, with plenty of time to explore the prairie or nap. Bob explored and I think everyone else napped.



A beautiful sunrise greeted us on our second morning from Round Top Shelter.



One of the many colonies of pitcher plants that dotted Chase Prairie. Although many of the plants had been burned by the cold weather, quite a few young plants can be seen growing here. Pitcher Plants receive much of their nourishment by trapping and digesting insects that are attracted to the sweet nectar in the base of the plant.



BMTA members (from left) Dave Hagen, Jim Kriner, Dick Evans, Gilbert Treadwell, Ken Cissna and Bob Brown.



Beautiful Golden Club were everywhere.





Our night on Round Top was monumental. We were treated to an amazing show from the almost full moon and an equally amazing sunrise and moon set. In 2016, the Okefenokee Swamp was designated one of the best places in the country to view the night sky without light pollution.

The next morning we discovered again that navigation thru the prairie was difficult and we were happy to arrive at Canal Run Shelter with the prospect of traveling downstream for the remainder of our journey. After we got set up on the platform, Ken, Mike, and Bob set off downstream for about two miles to scout out our route for our final day in the swamp. We returned to Canal Run to find, as was the case at Round Top, a welcome by the resident alligator and crumb catcher.



“Crumb Snatcher” remained close to the Canal Run Shelter expecting an easy meal!

Our final day included a steady paddle thru narrow channels for about four miles until the trail opened up again. On the way out, Bob, Ken and Mike explored Billy’s Island which was located about three miles from Stephen C. Foster State Park where our cars were located. Soon we had paddled over 30 miles and our adventure was at an end.

As in every one of my previous trips to the swamp, each of us can’t wait to return again for another adventure in this amazingly beautiful wilderness!



## Nature's Marker

by Joy Forehand



Most of us have been to Fall Branch Falls and then hiked on up the Benton MacKaye Trail to Rocky Mountain.

But how many of us really notice what is around us as we hike up the trail?

As you leave the falls and continue north bound on the BMT, about 100 yards up the trail from the cutoff to the viewing platform, the BMT makes sharp left turn. That's where most hikers may see a large rock in the center of the trail that discourages hikers from heading to the top of the falls. And that is all that most of us have noticed ... a large rock.

However, once you are at the top of the rock steps after the turn, turn around and look back down at the rock ... it turns into something very appropriate for the BMT ... a rather large diamond.

Did Mother Nature know the diamond-blazed BMT would one day be coming to Fall Branch Falls?

*"...leaving a footpath for generations to follow."*

## Amazon Smile Benefits BMTA

If you are going to make purchases from Amazon please use this address: BMTA's unique link is <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/58-1428009>. If you do so, Amazon will direct a small share of your purchases to BMTA. A convenient way to do this is to click on the link and then bookmark that page on your toolbar or wherever you keep hiking links.

**THANK YOU!!!**

## A SPECIAL INVITE TO YOU

by George Owen

### **Wilderness Wildlife Week, May 7-11; Fun, Learning, Hikes in the Smokies!**

Every year now for over a quarter century thousands have gathered in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, for the annual Wilderness Wildlife Week. Many of these are hikers from the three main trail clubs here in the mountains of Northern Georgia and surrounding areas. You are now invited to become part of this great event at the Pigeon Forge LeConte Center, May 7-11 (Tuesday-Saturday) or any part thereof.

For the first time this May there are two workshops with a Benton MacKaye Trail Association connection. Ron Tipton, long-time BMTA member and immediate past executive director of the National Appalachian Trail Conservancy, will present a program on opening day, May 7, entitled "The Appalachian Trail: Today & Tomorrow," from 3-4 p.m. This is followed by BMTAer George Owen's program in the same room, 4:30-5:30, entitled "Benton MacKaye Trail: the Smokies 93-Mile Trail - What and Where Is It?" This is the first time at Wilderness Wildlife Week a program has been presented on the BMT. Both programs are in the LeConte Center, the Pigeon Forge huge new conference and convention center.

Following opening day, there are hikes as well as workshops and programs every day - hikes in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These are listed in some detail in the long schedule on the website (access information below). Each hike is free, with two guides and they are provided with free bus transportation to and from trailheads. Several hikes of varying difficulty from easy to strenuous are available daily. Signups for hikes occur later each afternoon in advance of each hike - be sure to read the instructions about that on the website.

BMTAers are especially invited to some hikes our own George Owen is leading - to Charlie's Bunion on the Appalachian Trail (Wednesday) with Ron Tipton as co-leader - and to hikes other days that have Ron's wife Rita as co-leader. BMTAer Tom Sewell will also be helping with these hikes.

Your only cost for this 29th great annual event is your lodging, meals and travel to and from Pigeon Forge.

Now, to access further detailed information on this week simply look under "Search" go to "Wilderness Wildlife Week - 2019" or [www.mypigeonforge.com/event/wilderness-wildlife-week](http://www.mypigeonforge.com/event/wilderness-wildlife-week) - click on the item below the opening picture saying "view and download 2019 Wilderness Wildlife Program Guide" and find the basic information you need, including workshops, programs, hikes - full schedule details. NOTE: Hikes are listed under "Excursions."

So come and join in on this wonderful annual event with people from around America - attend all or part of it. Also many of us from the BMTA and sister hiking clubs in our area often enjoy going out to evening dinner in small groups after hikes or programs.

If you need more information on Wilderness Wildlife Week, feel free to contact either of these two BMTAers who have been involved there for years: George Owen or Darcy Douglas.



## BMTA Featured at REI

by Mike Pilvinsky

On a Saturday, Mike Pilvinsky, Ken Cissna and Carolyn Sewell set up a BMTA “Educational Display” for the staff and customers at the Kennesaw REI on Barrett Parkway. We had been invited by Angie Bolton, the store manager, who was very enthusiastic about spreading the word of our trail and our association. Throughout the day, we spoke to many, many customers who were interested in hiking and maintaining the trail. The employees shared their manager’s enthusiasm and are looking forward to spending a day of community service on our trail in the future.

We were set up at the end of the line of cashiers so every customer who purchased or exchanged something had to walk right past our display. One thing about REI; we know virtually every customer has an interest in outdoor activity; a perfect target audience to market our message to! Later this month Bob Ruby will continue to cement our relationship with REI by making an advertised presentation to the customers at the store.

A word of caution to those who might man this station in the future. It is really tough to spend eight hours in an REI store and not walk out with an arm full of new clothing or gear!



Mike showing a customer where the trail crosses HWY 515.



Mike and Carolyn with a customer who was looking for something to help him get back into outdoor activities again.



Mike and Carolyn enjoying a conversation with a couple from Cherry Log who had hiked the BMT last year.

## Georgia March Work Report

by Phil Guhl

On a misty, damp, overcast and dreary March 9<sup>th</sup>, 26 volunteers showed up for our regularly scheduled monthly work trip (aka THE second Saturday of every month). I didn't feel like getting out of bed facing a 40 plus percent chance of rain and thunderstorms; however, each and every one of the participants made me know it was worth it...and did the weather cooperate? Yes it did! It was a great sunny day with a slight breeze. Perfect for working the trail.

We departed from The Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge and caravanned to Little Skeenah Creek Trailhead (Section 3a) on Highway 60. The safety debriefing commenced, followed by a Job Hazard Analysis. At this point the two teams gathered their tools, partnered up and the Rhodes team shuttled over to Skeenah Gap Road Trailhead (Section 3c). I am sure many of you know what kind of challenge the two teams were facing...both mountains offer a challenging uphill trek. Were they deterred? Absolutely NOT!

Hats off to Bob Cowdrick and his highly energetic outreach program. We had five guests, of which some became members! There would have been two more, but they got lost enroute to the trailhead. We were able to meet them afterwards and they appeared interested in trying it again in the future.



Certified crosscut sawyer Bob Cowdrick (center) explaining the use of a crosscut saw to guest Martin Smith of the Boy Scouts (left) and Preston Kemp of Georgia Tech (right). (credit: Mike Kovitch)



Did this crew knock it out of the park or what?? The realization of what the teams accomplished is nothing short of amazing:

- Cleaned 70 water diversions
- Installed 4 water diversions
- Cut out 2 trees
- Addressed 3 seeps
- AND everyone was off the trail safely before 2 PM!
- AND everyone was fed and watered thoroughly afterwards...thank you Sue Ricker, Debra Guhl and Rob Herman! Chili, hotdogs, cookies and beverages. How about Sue Ricker's Homemade Chili and cookies? It was great!



A seep crossing architected and built by Steve Bayliss...allows the water to run under the rocks versus across the trail. (credit: Debra Guhl)

This is the epitome of great teamwork, attention to detail, and an outstanding spirit...**a big THANK YOU from me and the entire BMTA!**

The teams were:

**Wallalah Team** (20 diversions and three seeps):

- Debra Guhl
- Sue Ricker
- George Owen
- Rob Herman
- Ken Cissna
- Steve Bayliss (the mason)
- Ben Yaun (the rock bar carrier!)
- Phil Guhl (Leader)



Wallalah Team. (credit: Mike Kovitch)

Continued next page





Rhodes Team. (credit: Mike Kovitch)

**Rhodes Team** (54 diversions and two trees):

- Barry Allen (Leader)
- Bob Cowdrick (Leader)
- Butch Watson
- Tammy Watson (Welcome back!)
- Mike Kovitch (BMTA photographer)
- Stephen Edwards (Boy Scouts – first time guest!)
- Britta Smith (Boy Scouts – first time guest!)
- Martin Smith (Boy Scouts – first time guest!)
- Frank Forehand
- Darcy Douglas
- David Watkins (first time member!)
- Larry Dumas
- Nick Lee (Georgia Tech – first time guest!)
- Preston Kemp (Georgia Tech – first time guest!)
- David Blount
- David Lankford
- Janice Lankford
- Steve Pruett

Did we stop at the end of the day? Nothing could stop this team of agile, energetic, and productive workers! While we were enjoying our social hour and gorging on the prepared food, a group of people from Atlanta got their truck stuck in the mud while attempting to park in order to see the Toccoa River Swinging Bridge. The BMTA came to the rescue and pulled them out, then directed them to drive down FS816 to see what they came to see...



BMTA to the rescue! (credit: Mike Kovitch)



# Georgia March Supplemental Work Report

by Phil Guhl

In response to several reports of downed trees leading to and from Big Frog Mountain, a saw trip was put together with a relatively short notice and the response was overwhelming! Fifteen motivated volunteers came out on a beautiful March 30<sup>th</sup> to meet the challenge despite this being a supplemental trip versus our planned work trip on the second Saturday of the month.

Some folks met at Home Depot in Blue Ridge and carpoled up, while the rest of the crew reported directly to Thunder Rock Campground on Highway 64 in Tennessee. I had anticipated a much longer trip, in miles, but after talking to one of the scouts about his report (thank you Andy Meeks and Chris Fraker for scouting the trail for the crew) I determined our objectives would be best met with an in and out trek.

As is custom for most of our trips, at 9:00 AM we discussed safety, identified the objectives/goals and addressed possible hazards for the day. We then consolidated vehicles and caravanned up to the trailhead at FS221 to walk south. Despite all of this, the team remained committed to making it happen...and they did!

Any trip up towards Big Frog can be a tough one. Not only is it a good cardio workout, but your glutes know you have done something. Couple this with doing crosscut sawing, carrying extra water and lunch, you have set yourself up for a decent workout. From FS 221 to the southern branch of Rough Creek Trail, the team cleared about 2.8 miles of trail using crosscut saws and axes. I wasn't actually confident we could or would clear everything based on the reports; however, who am I to doubt these wonderful people?? They faced the challenge and didn't slow down all day...and it was longer than our typical trips: six and a half non-stop hours. I continue to be amazed!

The only—light hearted—complaining I heard was that Debra Guhl and Sue Ricker had not set up a diner at the end of the day. Where was the food? Where was the drink? Please don't let this be a trend... I explained that some suffering is expected on these supplemental trips and everyone seemed to be good with that. Actually, there was a nice time of fellowship after the work was over and we returned to our vehicles. Even Debra and Sue need a break from treating us.

All total, the teams removed 21 blowdowns and several of these were made up of multiple trees (Note: this is debated by some in that they believe we did more...did I mention tough?). *Additionally, it was another accident free trip and everyone made it off the trail without incident. Outstanding!!*



## Celebrate National Trails Day 2019 Vogel State Park, Pavilion #2 June 1, 2019

Please select from the three events below that take place between 9 am and noon to participate in. Meet your group in the parking lot beside the lake.

**Note: Luncheon attendees – please bring a covered dish to share.**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Trail work on the Bear Hair Trail**

Lawson Herron and Dayton Miller – Leaders

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Sawyer Contest and Search and Rescue Demonstration**

Robert Collins – Sawing Contest Leader

Ken Hughey – Search and Rescue Leader

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Family Friendly Hike**

George Owen – Leader

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. **Covered Dish Luncheon and Program**

**Welcome to Vogel**

Jack Becker – Vogel State Park Manager

**Recognition of Groups\*\* – Bill Bryant**

**AT Thru-hiker Short stories – Brent Binion**

**Door Prize Drawings**

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **Club – Specific Meetings as Needed**

**GATC Prospective Member Orientation**

1:30 p.m. – Closing **Enjoy the Outdoors!**

Thanks to participating hiking clubs and Joe Boone and Dayton Miller for organizing National Trails Day 2019 and to Melanie Spamer for organizing the luncheon. \*\*Special recognition to Andy Baker, USFS District Ranger BRRD; Jay Dement GATC President; Barry Allen, BMTA President; Evelyn Yarns MHH President; and Bill Hodge, SAWS. Thank you to the members of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA), Mountain High Hikers (MHH), and Georgia Forest Watch (GFW).





## 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. We're into spring now with crisp weather and all those beautiful flowers emerging. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month's newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

### April

**April 8** (Monday) Cartecay Loop Trail.

A fairly easy 4 mile loop trail, much of it along the Cartecay River.

Contact Hike leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or 813-310-6084.

**April 12** (Friday) BMT near Cherohala and Tellico Plains, TN: From Unicoi Overlook/Beech Gap parking (elevation 4,400') to Whigg Meadow (elevation 4,940').

5.8 miles, moderate difficulty. We will place a shuttle car at Mud Gap to shorten the return from Whigg Meadow.

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

**April 15** (Monday) BMT in Cohuttas: From Dally Gap to the remains of the old fire tower and back. About 8 miles, moderate. Hiking uphill first half and downhill second. About 1000 feet elevation change each way.

Contact hike leader Tom Sewell at [SewellTom AT yahoo.com](mailto:SewellTom@yahoo.com) or text to 706-669-6406.  
(Rescheduled from March 25)

**April 22** (Monday) Big Frog Trail to Rough Creek Trail to BMT to Thunder Rock Campground. 8.1 miles, moderate. Most of the elevation change is in last few miles, downhill to the campground.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or 813-310-6084

**April 26** (Friday) Hike and Lazy Lunch on the (Jacks River) Rocks.

5 miles, easy. We will meet near Blue Ridge at 10 AM and carpool to Dally Gap adjacent to the Cohutta Wilderness. Our leisurely, down and back hike begins at Dally and follows the Jacks River Trail (and the BMT briefly) for 2.5 miles to the first crossing of the Jacks River. We will use the fine sitting rocks at the river crossing for a leisurely lunch. BYO Lunch!

Also bring Texas or the like if you want to do a bit of trans-Jacks exploring during lunch while others snooze in the (we hope) sun. The return hike to Dally Gap is uphill all the way, but steady and never close to steep. We are in no hurry. Wilderness area so 12 hikers maximum.

Contact hike leaders Tom and Jane Keene at tkbmta AT gmail DOT com or (after noon Thursday May 2) 770-548-4935.

## May

**May 1** (Wednesday) Lady Slipper Hike: Fall Branch Falls to Weaver Creek on BMT. 6.2 miles, moderate to strenuous (1300' up, 1400' down). We'll pause to watch the water cascade down Fall Branch Falls and later enjoy a leisurely lunch atop Rocky Mountain. Along the way, Trillium and Lady Slipper gardens will provide the perfect backdrop for the hike. Shuttle.

Contact hike leader Joy Forehand at jwfbgra AT gmail.com or 386-334-0336.

**May 18** (Saturday) AT-BMT Springer Mountain Upper Loop. This moderate loop trek of 4.6 miles at a moderate pace includes 1.2 miles on the Appalachian Trail and 3.4 on the Benton MacKaye Trail featuring the southern terminus of both trails and two great vistas from atop bluffs on the way, one on each trail. Only about 0.8 mile of the trip's initial start up Springer Mountain has much climb (of a few hundred feet elevation change) and it's not all that steep. This is a favorite Georgia loop trail of many hikers. The leader will share some history of the two trails in this area along the way.

Contact hike leader George Owen evenings between 7-11 p.m. at 706-374-4716.

**May 24** (Friday) Pinnacle Knob in Rabun County – out and back on Bartram Trail. 8.5 miles, moderately strenuous. We will begin at Warwoman Dell, east of Clayton and pass two beautiful waterfalls, Becky Branch and Martin Creek Falls, traveling through lots of rhododendron and mountain laurel thickets along the way. We'll take the side trail to Pinnacle Knob for lunch. Hoping to see some blooms.

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

**May 25** (Saturday) BMT: Three Forks to the Swinging Bridge over the Toccoa River. This 8.7 mile hike is equal in difficulty from either direction (~500' elevation change). To reduce shuttle time, we are going to do it as a "key exchange." Details will be available once prospective hikers and drivers indicate interest.

Contact hike leader Tom Sewell: SewellTom AT yahoo.com or text to 706-669-6406

## June

**June 1** (Saturday) National Trails Day. Vogel State Park. Save the date – more information to follow next month.

**June 9** (Sunday) BMT: Wilscot Gap to Shallowford Bridge. This 7.6-mile trek is not the easiest Benton MacKaye Trail section in Georgia, but it is pretty typical of the trail in the peach state. While rated moderately strenuous, this particular trek has the advantage that the leader is getting older (81), slower and loves little rests on the uphills (or anywhere else he can have them)! The trip begins with the longest, hardest uphill of 1.3 miles with just under 700-ft. elevation climb. We will take that in a slow and modest speed, to top off on Tipton Mountain (3,147').



Lunch will be at the fire tower on Brawley Mountain (3,027'). We will end the hike walking alongside the tumbling Toccoa River for a half mile to our waiting vehicles at Shallowford Bridge. Shuttle involved.

Contact hike leader George Owen evenings between 7-11 p.m. at 706-374-4716.

**June 15** (Saturday) BMT from FS 221 to Thunder Rock Campground and back to the picnic tables on the Rhododendron Trail.

4.9 mile, easy; 98% downhill. We will include watching the water arrive at the Ocoee Whitewater Center before we hike. The rhododendron should be in full bloom and the patch of wild raspberries, too.

Contact Clare Sullivan at [clare7982 AT gmail.com](mailto:clare7982@gmail.com)

**June 24** (Monday) Turtletown Creek Falls.

4 miles, moderate. Two beautiful falls in one short hike.

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

## Sisson Property-Craddock Center to Indian Rock

by Ken Cissna

Fourteen hikers, including four guests, hiked the BMT north-bound about two miles from the Craddock Center to Indian Rock and back, for a total of about four moderate miles. The weather was uncertain for the morning of hike day, March 29<sup>th</sup>, so the hike was scheduled for the afternoon and most of us met at the Pink Pig for some lunch in advance of the hike. The creek was running beautifully. The hike was at a slow, leisurely pace and we included stops at both the Chapel and the Shelter. All in all, an excellent experience for everyone. Hikers included Betty Ann Archer, Harry Archer, Ken Cissna (hike leader), Darcy Douglas, Elsie and Tim Eckberg (guests), Larry Jarkovsky, Andy Meeks (sweep), George Owen, Mike Pilvinsky, Amy and Randy Russo (guests), David Schroeder and Tom Sewell.



**The deadline for the May Newsletter is Wednesday May 1.  
Thank you!**