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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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JULY 2019

President's Column

Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe. Anonymous

Various versions of this quote have been around for decades and have been attributed to many individuals, most popularly to Abraham Lincoln. But unfortunately, no direct link can be found between this quote and any of Lincoln's speeches or writings. Too bad. This is a doozy of a quote and really illustrates the need for preparation before starting any task. *Lincoln should have said it* and that is probably why it has so often been attributed to him.

Preparation is critical to everything we do. It doesn't mean that a job can't be completed without time spent 'sharpening,' but it does mean that you will save a lot of wear and tear on your back if you start with a sharp 'axe.'

Last week, on a storm-threatened Saturday in the Heart of Darkness along the Tennessee/North Carolina state line, we had 11 volunteers meet to work a six mile section of trail. Of these 11, six drove up from Georgia and the remaining five individuals are the core of our Tennessee organization – the people we depend on to care for the trail in Tennessee and North Carolina. The threatening weather didn't help with volunteer turnout and neither did the remoteness of the work. But last Saturday's Tennessee work trip highlights a fundamental problem for the BMTA: **as an organization, our greatest need is volunteer help in the Tennessee/North Carolina corridor.** We needed 20 volunteers to work these six miles of trail last Saturday. And I want to say this clearly for the benefit of our readers, to all the members who may help lay a foundation for new volunteers in Tennessee and North Carolina: *we must find a way to draw in new people passionate and willing to work with us in the forests of Tennessee and North Carolina.*

We cannot become the preeminent mid-distance hiking trail in the nation without first addressing the need for more volunteer maintenance help in Tennessee and North Carolina. This is a tough nut to crack and has been for our entire existence as an organization. I'm not sure we are 'sharpening' all of the tools we have to tackle this job, so I want to put it out there for everyone to stew over, to think about and to offer help, suggestions and action where they may.

Continued next page

Some of the nearest population centers to these remote sections of trail are in Blue Ridge and Blairsville, Georgia and the Murphy, North Carolina, areas. Georgia and Tennessee volunteers came from near and far: from as far away as Decatur and Ball Ground, Georgia and Philadelphia, Tennessee. And some came from a bit closer in – Reliance, Coker Creek and the Monroe County, Tellico Plains area.

But one thing that stands out is the following: Murphy, North Carolina, is the nearest population center to our work last Saturday on Beaverdam Bald and Sledrunner Gap. And yet, I don't think we have anyone in our volunteer base joining us from the Murphy area, home to the Tusquitee Ranger District Office of the Nantahala National Forest. Murphy has a population almost as large as the combined Blue Ridge/Blairsville area. *We need volunteer help from Murphy and the surrounding area.* Anyone have ideas? And just so you are prepared, you WILL be asked to help pursue ideas when you call/email with thoughts! And it isn't just Murphy. It is Chattanooga and all points in between. Tennessee and North Carolina are both big states, needing much help.

Sharpening the axe. Volunteer help in Tennessee and North Carolina – a critical need for our immediate and long-term health. Viewing this positively, we have a tremendous opportunity to reach out to some untapped population centers in Tennessee and North Carolina, using our Publicity group to spread the word as we hone our recruiting skills. We need to keep our eyes open for new venues and alliances in the northern reaches of the trail, discovering people who are passionate about the Forests and will become the backbone of our trail in Tennessee and North Carolina. A key problem and a major opportunity.

Sharpening the axe.....Till next month, hope to see you on the trail.

And by the way, many thanks to the five volunteers who went back a few days later and finished the job we couldn't finish on the fourth Saturday. That is one tough hike from Sandy Gap. Good Job!

Tennessee Work Trip

by John Zardis



Thank you John Zardis! We will miss you.

One hundred eighty hours went into clearing the Heart of Darkness in June (Sections 16a and 16b). Last year's concerted effort on this section definitely helped as the trail was in much better shape this year than last. Now is a good time to walk this seven mile section.

In July Dick Evans will be taking over for me as the director of maintenance in Tennessee. I've really enjoyed working with this great organization and wish you the best in your endeavor to keep this great trail open. The plan once again is to try to get to Section 19c which is in bad need of logging and brushing. Dick will confirm the exact location for the July 27th Work Trip.



Have you made your reservations?

BMTA's 2019 Annual Meeting Nov. 1 – 3
Fontana Village Lodge, North Carolina

**BMTA's Annual Meeting &
Awards Banquet**

Friday Nite Social

Complimentary Hors d'Oeuvres
Cash Bar

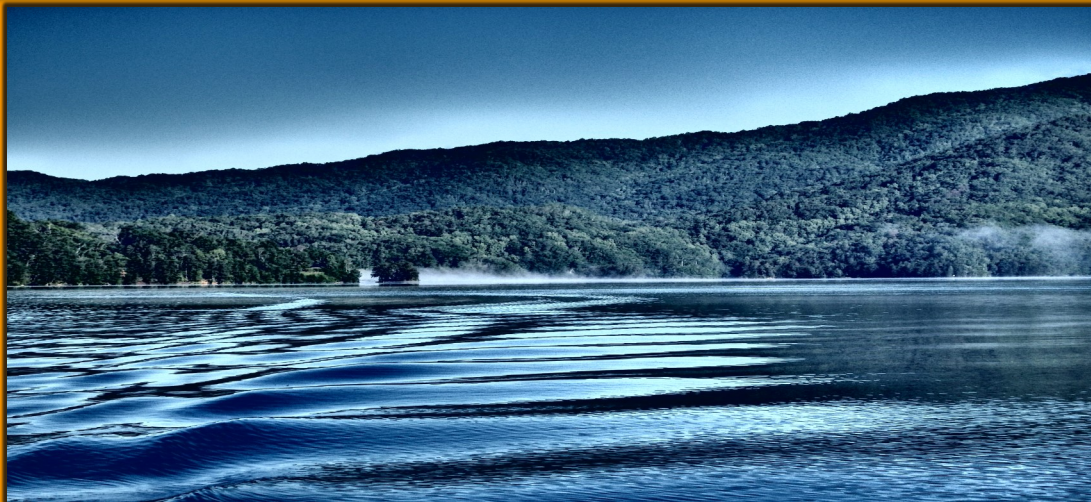
**Great Hikes &
Non-Hiking Activities!**



COME EARLY / STAY LATE
SPECIAL RATE APPLIES TO YOUR ENTIRE STAY!
Lodge Rooms, Cabins and Campsites



For reservations call 828-498-2211.
To receive your discount -
Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!



Annual Meeting Raffle

Proceeds from the raffle go to perimeter fencing & parking stops for the new parking area at Big Stamp Gap and material for a Three Forks Kiosk.



Unicoi Lodge
2 Nite Stay



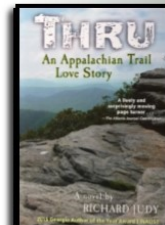
Fontana Village
2 Nite Stay



Courtesy REI
7 Backpacks



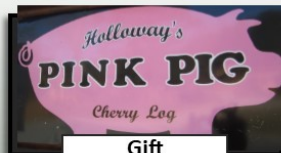
Hike Inn
1 Nite Stay



Autographed by
Richard Judy



Help BMTA complete the
Big Stamp Parking Lot &
Long Creek Kiosk!
Tickets—\$10.00



Gift
Basket



For reservations call 828-498-2211.
To receive your discount -
Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!

Roots and Benches

by Phil Guhl

Last fall the Benton MacKaye Trail Association's (BMTA's) event tent was at Fall Branch Falls to celebrate the Grand Opening of the rerouted trail to Fall Branch Falls. On June 15, 2019, BMTA's event staff were back at the falls to announce the addition of two benches to the trail.

The new trail is a tenth of a mile longer, but the elevation change actually is a bit gentler than the old trail. Recognizing that many visitors to the falls are not accustomed to even short hikes in the mountains, the BMTA initially installed one bench along the route. These two additional benches will afford guests to the falls even more opportunities for a break.

The benches were installed on the BMTA's June work trip, held June 8, 2019. Twenty-one volunteers came out to enjoy the "liquid sunshine" (pouring rain). Soaked to the bone and covered in mud, the crew installed the two new benches. In addition, the crew removed slick roots, widened the trail and trimmed low hanging branches – all done to improve the safety and enjoyment of our guests to the falls, one of Fannin County's most popular attractions.



Rooting out the roots!



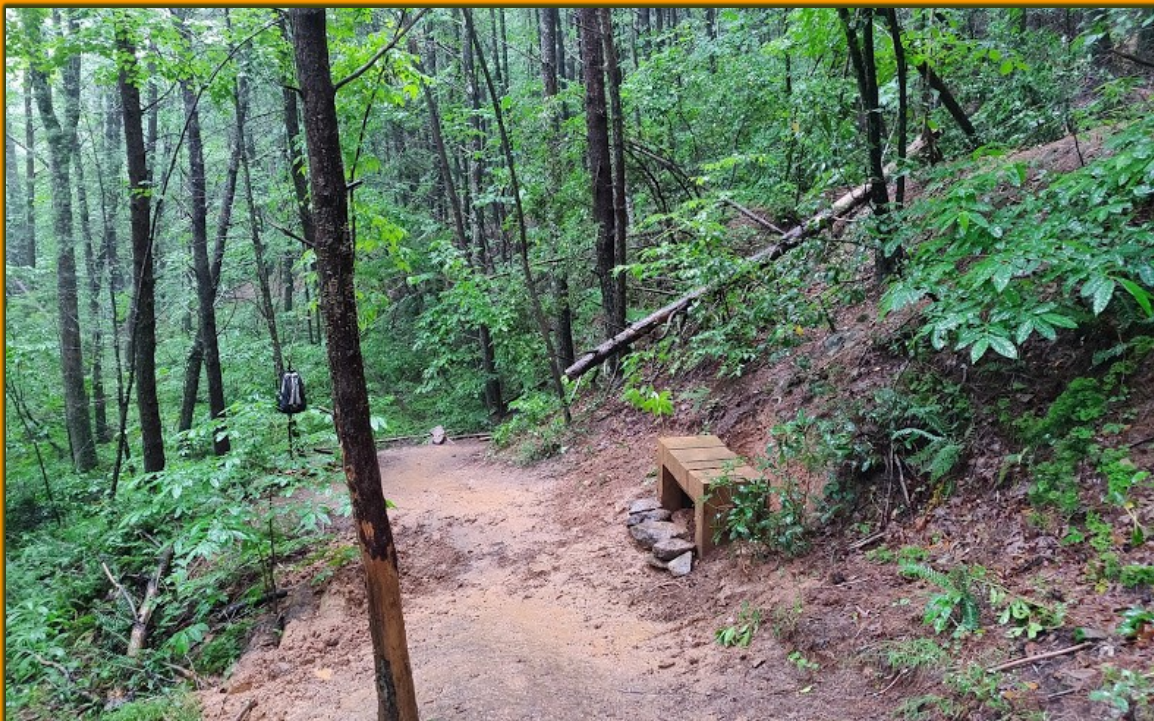
AHH, nothing like rest for the weary!



A couple of the BMTA's regular women participants did not make this trip, but there is an increase in female participation...on this day there were five outstanding lady trail workers: Joanie, Suzanne, Lois, Cary and Debra... At this rate, these events will not be male dominated for long...and they can swing a tool well! Even with the weather and the work load, every one of them maintained a positive and spirited attitude during the entire trip. It's always a joy to work alongside people of this caliber!

Now, the Benton MacKaye Trail to Fall Branch Falls has three benches on which to rest, as well as a smoother approach to the falls. Thank you, BMTA volunteers!

If you'd like to learn more about BMTA's Georgia work trips contact Phil Guhl, pguhl@guhlspace.com); for Tennessee / North Carolina work trips, contact Dick Evans, dick.evans@frontier.com; for sponsored hikes, contact Ken Cissna, kcissna@usf.edu; other questions, contact Joy Forehand, jwfbgr@gmail.com.



Membership Report

by Darcy Douglas

In June, as of this writing, we have 23 new members! I don't know for certain whether that is a record in one month, but I rather suspect it is, having been involved in one way or another, for most of the years since 1982. Wow!!!! Many of our new members are from out of state, meaning the three states the trail is in. Welcome to all of you and thank you to those who have renewed their dues, too!

Two of those new memberships are Corporate Members. They are both places of business in Blue Ridge, Georgia, one of our trail towns. Many hikers come through this area, so please check out our newest Corporate Members! Welcome to the Black Sheep Blue Ridge and to the Blue Ridge Brewery! The websites are below so you can check them out and get directions. Thanks to owners Ashlee and Brandon Lofton!



<https://www.blacksheepblueridge.com/>



<https://blueridgebrewery.com>

Arts in the Park

by The Publicity Committee

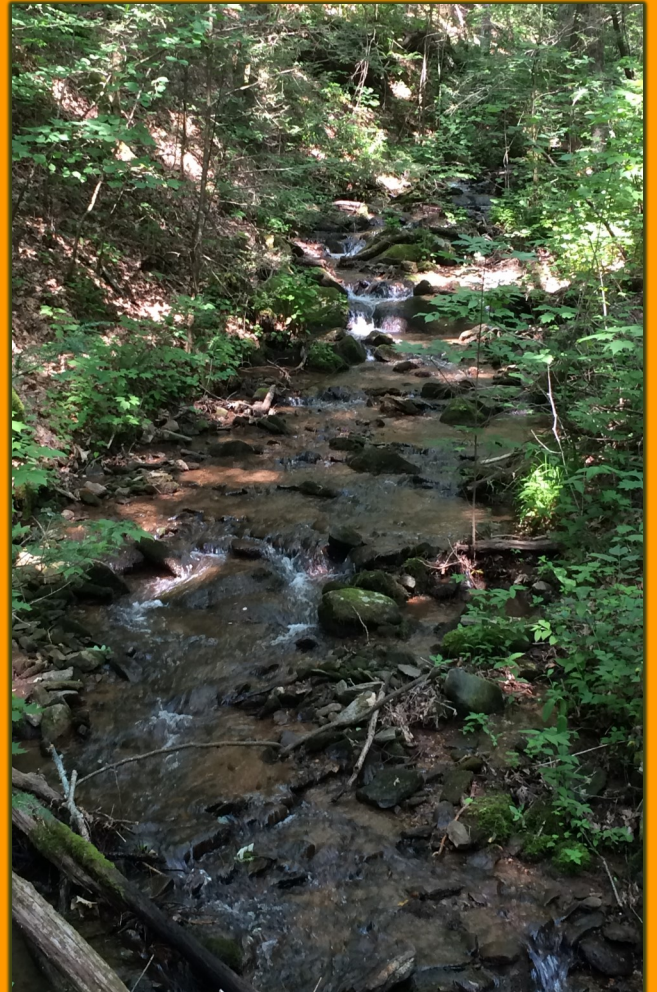
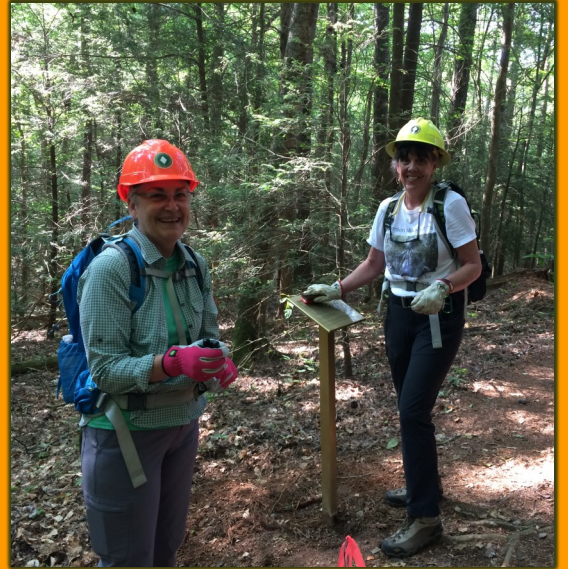


Absolutely perfect weather was on the docket for BMTA's event tent at the Spring Blue Ridge Arts in the Park Festival, held May 25-26, 2019, in Blue Ridge.

Visitors quickly gathered around the tent asking questions about hiking, BMTA hikes that are open to the public and, of course, trail maintenance. The engagement with the public payed off ... BMTA garnered three new memberships and five people joined the crew for BMTA's June Work Trip at Fall Branch Falls!

Our thanks go out to our dedicated volunteers: Jeff DePaola, Larry Dumas, Debra Guhl, Phil Guhl, Tom Keene, Jane Keene, Cary Page, Dave Ricker, Sue Ricker, Clare Sullivan, Frank Forehand, Gilbert Treadwell and Ben Yaun.

National Trails Day at Vogel

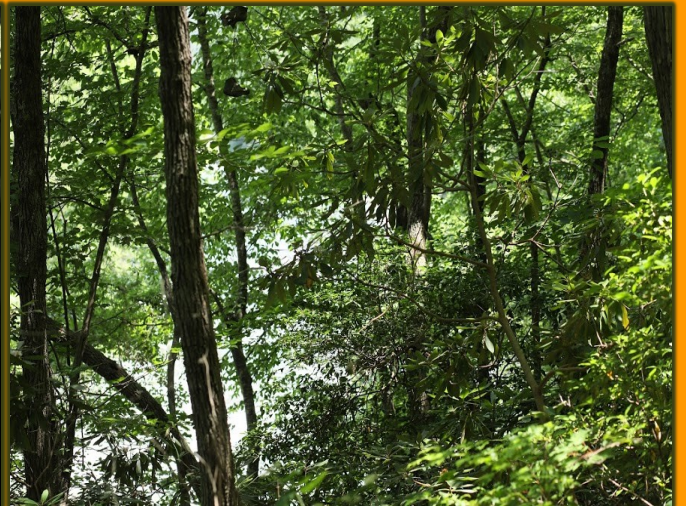


BMTA Hike FS Road 221 to Highway 64

by Claire Sullivan with photos courtesy of Mike Kovitch

Sixteen hikers met at the Ocoee Whitewater Center to watch the water release “arrive.” Much to our disappointment the dam had never been closed from the previous day, thus the water didn’t “arrive.” We learned the abundant flow was due to the amount of rainfall and repair on a generator at Power House Number 3. As of June 17, the water is now back to the typical summer routine, being low Monday through Friday and released on Saturdays and Sundays.

We were delighted to have several of our new BMTA members join the 4.9 mile hike: Ted Antal, Betty Ann Archer, Harry Archer, Sharon Atcheson, Tom Atcheson and Joanie Baker. There were three vivacious “guests” in the group: Patrice Johnston, Debra Tew and Michelle Turner. It was such a beautiful day for a gorgeous hike down Chestnut Mountain, across FS Road 45, down to Thunder Rock Campground and up the Rhododendron Trail to the Whitewater Center. Along the way we stopped to taste ripe wild raspberries, and gaze in awe at the lovely blooms on the Rosebay Rhododendron and Wild Hydrangeas.



We also watched exciting rafters as they rode the big rapid near the entrance to the campground. Our photographer, Mike Kovitch, walked ahead to film clips for the emerging new BMTA website rebuild. While doing this, Mike saw several copperhead snakes and kept them at bay from the group.



Those who had been on this hike before were amazed at the number of fallen hemlocks and additional light that is along this section. We were all eager to eat lunch at the Ocoee Whitewater Center with lots of action in the water right before our eyes.



Turtletown Creek Falls

by Darcy Douglas with photos courtesy of Betty Sammis

We met at 9:00am at the former Piggly Wiggly in Ducktown, signed in, introduced ourselves, had our safety talk, then carpooled to the trailhead. We had received a warning about the rebar on the concrete bridge crossing the creek and were able to avoid it. Once out of our cars we were greeted by a dead snake in the parking lot then hiked to the junction of the loop heading left toward the falls.



The falls were at their best, dazzling us all. We were reluctant to leave, but there were other hikers and the threat of rain so we left for the next set of falls. It was very humid, but we took our time and enjoyed being out on the trail. We did meet some others along the way and were able to help them find the falls. Mountain laurels were in bloom and added to the beauty of the trek.



On the second half of our loop, Tom Sewell and Doug Yarns cut out a tree blocking our route. Three of us had saws – so handy!! Thank you Doug and Tom! With a storm pending, we voted whether to have lunch or to just head back to the cars. A very happy bunch of hikers returned to Ducktown, and home, before the storm hit.

What an utterly delightful group of people were on this hike! One joined the BMTA, and hopefully the others will, too! We missed Howard Baggett, who was scheduled to lead this hike. Hope he'll soon be back in the saddle and on the trail. This was one of the more joyous hikes I've ever been on. I am looking forward to having this same group another time!



Participating were Sharon Atcheson, Tom Atcheson, Darcy Douglas, Daisie Jones, Scott Jones, Judy McCammon, Orion McCammon, Paul McCord, Betty Sammis, Tom Sewell, Michelle Turner, Kathy Williams, Doug Yarns and Evelin Yarns.

BMTA Outreach at the Ocoee Whitewater Center

by Clare Sullivan, photos by Mike Kovitch

Saturday, June 22, was a gorgeous day for 10 BMTA members to share information about our Benton MacKaye Trail with visitors at the Ocoee Whitewater Center (OWC). We used the opportunity try crosscut sawing to entice families to learn about the BMT. Each member of our team brought unique talents, making our day fun and successful. Since the generator at Power House 3 had been repaired, we enjoyed watching the water release “arrive.” Mike Kovitch brought breakfast and drinks for all. Kathy Williams and Joy Forehand met visitors walking by and encouraged them to stop in our booth. Bob Brown strolled the walkways to recruit families to practice crosscut sawing. Ed Sullivan, Bob Brown, Frank Forehand and Mike Kovitch thrilled children with their crosscut skills. There were 19 participants for sawing. Ed Sullivan brought food and Hank Baudet was the chef. Cary Page, Lina Prince and Clare Sullivan talked with adults about our trail. Thank you to each team member for a great OWC outreach event.



A Storm of Hornets

by Gilbert Treadwell

On Saturday June 22 six intrepids headed north from Skeenah Gap on Section 4. It was a beautiful day after storms during the night. The storm apparently dislodged a hornet nest and deposited it near the trail. I missed it but Ted Antal and Eddie Cole were not so lucky. Each was stung multiple times. Tom Johnson, Mike Pilvinsky and Ken Cissna noticed the brouhaha and gave it a wide berth. We moved on to a flat spot and broke out the sting relief. Benzocaine works well.

We stopped at Payne Gap for a snack and then headed on to Deadennen Mountain where we surprisingly saw a sign that indicated Wilscot Mountain. Mike Pilvinsky's GPS indicated no, it was Deadennen Mountain. The trail actually skirts Wilscot Mountain before it reaches Wilscot Gap. We will be glad to make the signage change on Deadennen Mountain.



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!**

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@usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. With summer upon us, we are featuring a number of “water hikes” as well as other beautiful opportunities to see the great outdoors. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

July

July 12 (Friday) Pine Log Creek.

5 miles, moderate (one steep 400’ climb). See beautiful lake at old rock quarry with lots of fish.

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

July 14 (Sunday) Gahuti Trail.

8.1 miles, moderate to strenuous. Explore the Fort Mountain State Park back country including gorgeous overlook vistas and the cascades of a remote waterfall. State parking pass or \$5 parking fee required.

Contact hike leader Larry Dumas at ledumas@hotmail.com

July 20 (Saturday) BMT Mud Gap to Whigg Meadow (FAMILY AND DOG FRIENDLY HIKE—adult humans may bring children and one leashed dog).

3.2 miles, easy (500’ elevation change). From Mud Gap along the Cherohala Skyway in North Carolina, we will walk on the Benton MacKaye Trail uphill to Whigg Meadow at 5000 feet with 360-degree views of the surrounding Tennessee and North Carolina mountains. Shortly after leaving Mud Gap we will leave North Carolina for Tennessee. In addition we will have a short detour to see the grave of an unknown person who was killed by the Kirkland Bushwackers during the Civil War (Google “Kirkland Bushwackers” before your trip for an interesting history lesson for all). The trail is rocky in some places so we’ll take it slow and easy. Bring a sack lunch to picnic at the meadow and plenty of water.

Contact hike leader Larry Van Dyke at BMTAHiker@gmail.com.

July 22 (Monday) Emery Creek in the Cohuttas.

5 miles, moderate. The trail itself is fairly easy, but 26 stream crossings (a number up to your ankles and two to your knees) and a section of potentially slippery rocks toward the beginning and again at the end make it more difficult than it otherwise would be. Holly and Emery Creeks, two lovely waterfalls, and a nice trail make it worth the trouble. (Note: I have been told that a significant number of downed trees that had to be traversed last year are now cleared, but I haven’t yet seen that with my own eyes and feet.)

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@usf.edu or 813-310-6084.

July 26 (Friday) Cartecay Loop Trail.

4 miles, moderate. Much of the trail runs along the Cartecay River.

Contact hike leader Mike Pilvinsky at mikepilvinsky@hotmail.com

August

August 16 (Friday) Fort Mountain hiking medley: Stone Wall, Tower and Overlook Trail and Lake Trail loop.

3 miles, easy to moderate. State parking pass or \$5 parking fee.

Contact hike leader Larry Dumas at ledumas@hotmail.com

August 19 (Monday) Amadahy Trail. **DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE** (adult humans may bring a leashed dog)

5 miles, easy to moderate along the shore of Carter's Lake. Lunch at the marine campground.

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@usf.edu

September

September 9 (Monday) Stanley Gap Trail from Deep Gap Parking on Aska Road to Fall Branch Falls
5.5 miles, moderate. Short Shuttle.

Contact hike leader Evelin Yarns at eyarns@sprynet.com

September 16 (Monday) 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@yahoo.com or text to 706-669-6406

September 17 (Tuesday) Tobacco Pouch to Wildcat Campground.

5.1 miles, primarily moderate with occasional strenuous stretches. About 3.5 hours. Hike starts downhill and includes one high-water stream crossing with ropes. The payoff is a beautiful waterfall and pretty terrain along Wildcat Creek. Good hiking/water shoes and poles recommended.

Contact hike leader Steve Dennison by text at 706-253-3938 or email at sjd50@etcmail.com

September 20 (Friday) BMT: Highway 60 to/from Toccoa River and back. **DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE** (adult humans may bring a leashed dog).

7.4 miles, moderate. Great hike over Toonowee Mountain to the "Jewel of the BMT." Lunch at the river.

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@usf.edu or 813-310-6084

The deadline for the August Newsletter is July 31. Thank you!