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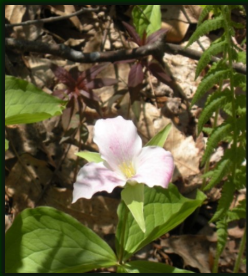
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**BMTA Headquarters**

# Benton MacKaye Trail Association



VOLUME 37, ISSUE 4

APRIL 2020

## President's Column

Last week, I sent a message to our members and friends concerning the status of the BMT and our ability to maintain and hike the trail -- as I understood it at the time. The message is repeated below. Since then, a few changes have drifted into my inbox, affecting essentially all maintenance on the trail.

The Forest Service in North Carolina and in the majority of the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee asked that volunteer work be suspended. Georgians are being asked to shelter in place, beginning Friday.

*Effective immediately, I am asking that all trail maintainers suspend maintenance work on the BMT. Hikers should check the status of all trails on various National Park Service or United States Forest Service websites, as well as checking with local authorities on directives.*

We invite you to make use of the trail as the opportunity provides, but we remind the public to be responsible and adhere to directives as posted. *Where the trail remains open*, individuals and small groups of hikers certainly may enjoy the trail. *In these areas*, maintainers are encouraged to do minor maintenance and note problems that need more extensive work -- work that can be resolved when threats posed by COVID-19 have receded. **NOTE: The CDC has recommended an upper limit on group size to 10 people with a distance of six feet maintained between individuals.** Federal agencies have left many decisions on park and trail closures to local officials within each agency.

*Governments widely recognize the benefits of recreation in times of stress. So when planning an outing, first look to federal and state agencies for guidance on recreation and trails, with local governments providing the final word as the most directly impacted. As of March 29, 2020, the BMT is closed from Springer Mountain to Weaver Creek. The BMT through Graham County, North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is also closed.*

The following websites are some that provide current information:

\*\*\*\*\***Blue Ridge Ranger District** and the USFS have announced the closure of the BMT from Springer Mountain through Weaver Creek, including parking and trailheads at Springer Mountain, Big Stamp Gap and Fall Branch Falls.

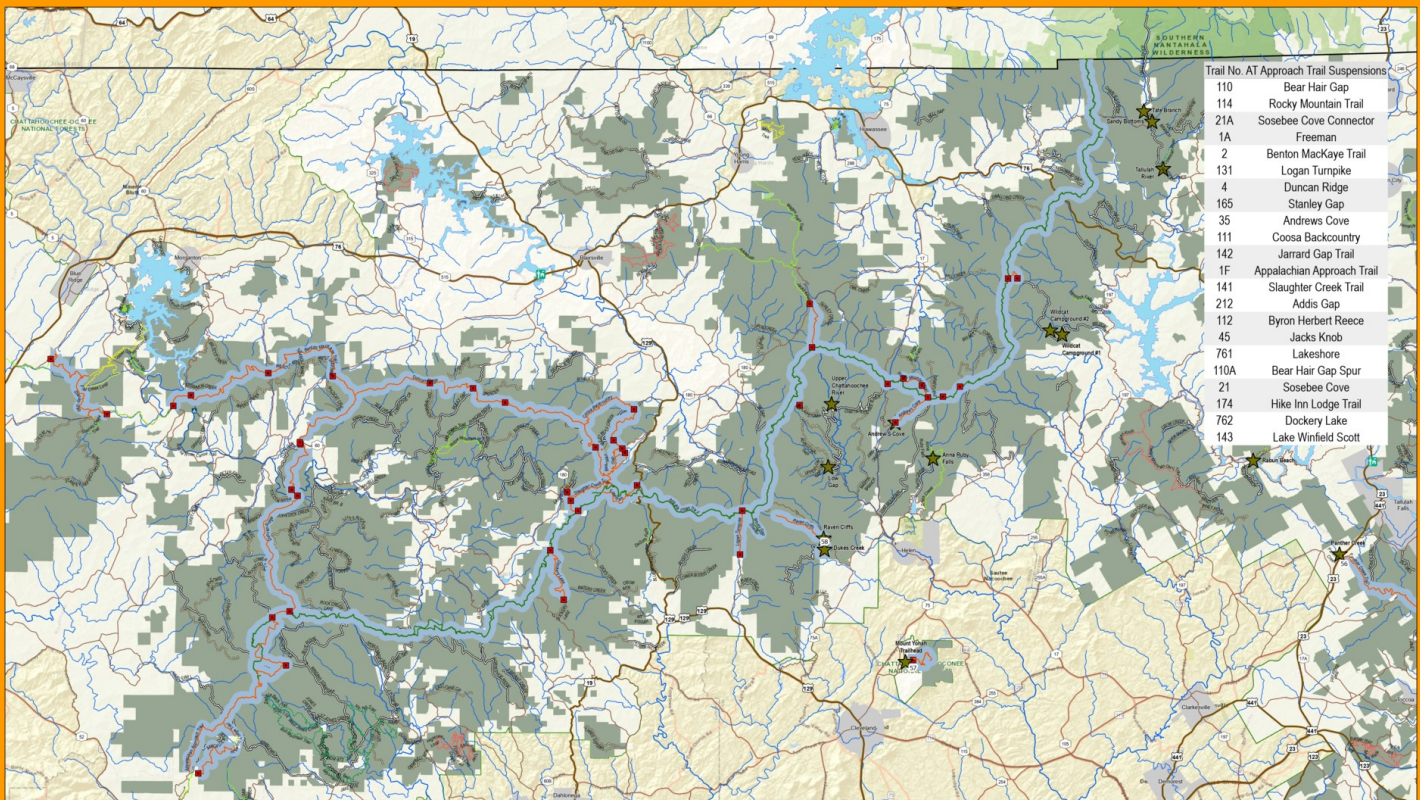
In addition, both Fannin and Gilmer Counties in North Georgia have asked that residents minimize travel and stay at home to reduce the burden on Emergency and First Responder personnel. Please refer to the following link for up to date information on Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest and Recreation closures: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/conf/alerts-notice>

\*\*\*\***Great Smokey Mountains National Park** has closed all recreation areas and hiking trails through at least April 30. Please check current information at: <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>

\*\*\*\***Graham County, North Carolina** in conjunction with the USFS has closed all back country camping on USFS lands in the county indefinitely. To review current status, please check information at: <http://grahamcounty.org/>

**Until next month – Please stay safe and well.....**

**CHATTAHOOCHEE-OCONEE NATIONAL FOREST**  
Temporary shut-down trailheads, access points to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail



## February Flakes for Flakes-Georgia Work Trip

by Phil Guhl

It was a cold day as many folks pulled into The Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. The brisk air brought smiles to every face as each of us was excited to get back to work after taking January off because of the storms and lightning that hit. This was, of course, a redo, i.e., the second attempt at working Section 2d from Highway 60 to the Toccoa River Swinging Bridge. I personally expected a productive day although I anticipated some cool damp rain. The Georgia maintenance trip wouldn't be a Georgia maintenance trip if there weren't some form of disruption in Mother Nature's offerings on the very day we were going out, right?

I looked at the weather Friday night. As I mentioned, I anticipated some precipitation along with chilly temperatures. Saturday morning I reviewed the forecast to see if we were under a Winter Weather Advisory. I thought, "Sure. Cold rain...winter weather...Ha!" The weather was the topic during breakfast, but I continued to be excited about getting out there to work the trail. I looked out the window at The Village and saw some snowflakes. I glanced quickly again at the forecast and saw it had been raised to a Winter Storm Warning. Still undeterred, I was ready to go. We walked outside and the snow really began to fall. It didn't take long to realize this was going to present a hazardous driving situation. We came together as a team and discussed the options. We all agreed to cancel the trip.

There is no wireless coverage at Tooni Gap at Little Skeenah Creek and several people planned to meet there. Thus, I headed to the trailhead along with my bride and Dave and Sue Ricker to meet them on the outside chance they showed up. Sure enough! Several braved the weather and arrived. I met with them and let them know we were calling off the trip. Everyone left except a few-there was a tangled mess of blowdowns at the trailhead. The age old millage sign was knocked down by the storm as well.

Gilbert Treadwell was the sawyer and was assisted by Samuel Sly, Debra Guhl, Brian Trinkle, David Langford and Janice Langford. Ned Noriega, who recently joined the BMTA, took up the Beast to repair the tread damage caused by the timber carnage. It was a wonderful time to work in the snow and to get something cleaned up that would hamper hikers.

We will see what March brings as we attempt to work Wallalah and Licklog Mountains.

Bring on the weather! What will it be? A volcano? A tsunami? A time warp vortex? Whatever it will be, I'm sure it will be big and we will be up for the challenge on the second Saturday of March.



*Celebrate BMTA's 40th Anniversary!*

**BMTA's 2020 Annual Meeting Nov. 13 – 15**

Unicoi State Park & Lodge, Helen, Georgia

**Great Hikes!**

Unicoi State Park to Helen for Lunch!  
Duke's Creek Falls & Raven Cliff's trails  
Unicoi Gap to Andrews Cove  
Yonah Mountain Trail

**Non Hiking Activities**

Shop Helen, GA!  
Trout Fishing  
Sautee Nacoochee



**COME EARLY / STAY LATE**

**SPECIAL RATE APPLIES TO YOUR ENTIRE STAY!**

Lodge Rooms, Unique Cabins and Campsites



**Friday Nite Social**

Complimentary Hors d' Oeuvres,  
S'mores & Hot Chocolate  
Cash Bar



**BMTA's Annual Meeting  
Awards Banquet by the Fireplace**

**Featured Speakers**

**And More!**



**Watch for details in future newsletters!**

## Bear Creek Was A “Bear”

by Martha Fowler

We had a beautiful day for the hike to Bear Creek after rescheduling twice because of the weather! There were a few obstacles in the path to climb over and the creeks were running full on the 3.3 mile loop. We all got our feet wet on the last creek crossing but that was ok because it was at the end of the hike! We also enjoyed viewing the Gennett Poplar Tree. Pictured left to right at this huge tree are Howard Baggett, Debbie Tew, Sue Ford, Martha Fowler and Larry Jarkovsky.



# GA March Work Trip Sections 3a, 3b, 3c GA Hwy 60 to Skeenah Gap

by Bob Cowdrick

Thirty seven BMTA members and guests met at 9am at GA Hwy 60 on a cloudy March day. After sampling Darcy's banana bread, we welcomed returning members and new guests. We broke into five teams with the goals of meeting someone new, learning something new and having fun.

Shane led the Skeenah Gap Long Hike Team, Phil the Section 3a Water Bar Team, Dave the Mid-Section Tread and Vegetation Team, Gilbert the Saw Crew Team and George the Sign Post Team. We accomplished our tasks and returned to GA Hwy 60 for an outstanding trailhead social facilitated by Debra and Sue.



## Interesting facts:

- ◆ 37 attendees
- ◆ 4 new guests
- ◆ 291 volunteer hours
- ◆ 2 miles of vegetation cleared
- ◆ 16 trees removed
- ◆ 25 water diversions maintained
- ◆ 30 areas of tread reshaping
- ◆ 0 injuries

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Many thanks to our volunteers and guests including Phil Guhl, Debra Guhl, Ann Redman, Ken Cissna, Dale Clark, Steve Pruett, Larry Dumas, Darcy Douglas, George Owen, Ben Yaun, Butch Watson, Patrick Ward, Frank Forehand, Susan Burkett, Don Burkett, Bob Nelson, Dave Ricker, Sue Ricker, David Watkins, Steve Dennison, Shelton Crow, Shane Morrison, Art Kolberg, David Langford, Janice Langford, Lynette Linn, Barry Allen, Bob Cowdrick, David Blount, Scott Williams, Brian Cave, Liam Wansing, Chad Wansing, Gilbert Treadwell, Rick Karolick, Sven Peterson and Jose Naldonado.

Our next Georgia work trip will be Saturday April 11, 2020. Consider joining us then!



**Join Now!**

Use this link to become a BMTA member:

[Membership](#)

A wooden-textured button with rounded corners. On the left is the BMTA logo, which is a circular emblem with a diamond shape in the center and the text 'BERTON MACKAY TRAIL ASSOCIATION' around the perimeter. To the right of the logo, the text 'Join Now!' is written in a bold, green, sans-serif font. Below that, in a smaller green font, is the text 'Use this link to become a BMTA member:'. At the bottom, the word 'Membership' is written in a green, italicized, sans-serif font, with a thin green line underneath it.

## “Alarming” AT Kickoff

by Joy Forehand

The annual AT Kickoff at Amicalola Falls Lodge (March 6 – 7) signifies the beginning of the hiking season and hiking enthusiasts gathered to celebrate. The event 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.

The BMTA booth was extremely busy. The majority already were familiar with the Benton MacKaye Trail and several said they're planning a thru-hike later this year. Nine indicated an interest in becoming members, 11 signed up to receive trail maintenance information and 30 signed up for hiking. To date we have one new member as well as one renewing member.



Saturday afternoon, Larry Dumas' presentation on "Hiking the Benton MacKaye" was well-received with many coming up afterwards to learn more about the BMT!

There was an added bit of excitement on Saturday when the fire alarm went off and everyone was escorted out of the building. Fortunately it was a beautiful, sunny day because we had to wait about a half hour for the fire department to arrive to check things out. They quickly decided there was no fire / problem and the Kickoff continued.

We couldn't do this without volunteers who generously donate their time. Thank you: Mike Banick, Larry Dumas, Frank Forehand, Sue Ricker and Dave Ricker!



## BMTA Corporate Members

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is grateful for the help and support provided by our Corporate Members. When you visit one of these businesses, please identify yourself as a BMTA member and be sure to thank them for their support!



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THE DUCKTOWN COPPER INN  
<https://www.theducktowncopperinn.com/location>

# Fall Creek Falls

by Kathy Williams

The weather was brisk but the scenery was incredible! We visited Piney Falls, Fall Creek Falls and Cane Creek Falls and Cascades. Larry Van Dyke was the listed hike leader but in truth his best friend Cody took the lead. At times Cody seemed puzzled and maybe annoyed by our slow progress as we gingerly picked our way over numerous rocks and boulders. Cody has a very expressive face. After all Cody, we only have two legs and you have four. Thank you Larry for offering this experience!



Piney Falls



Hike leader Cody, with his human, Larry.



Fall Creek Falls



Larry, dwarfed by massive rock formations.

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Cody giving Larry a “come on” look.



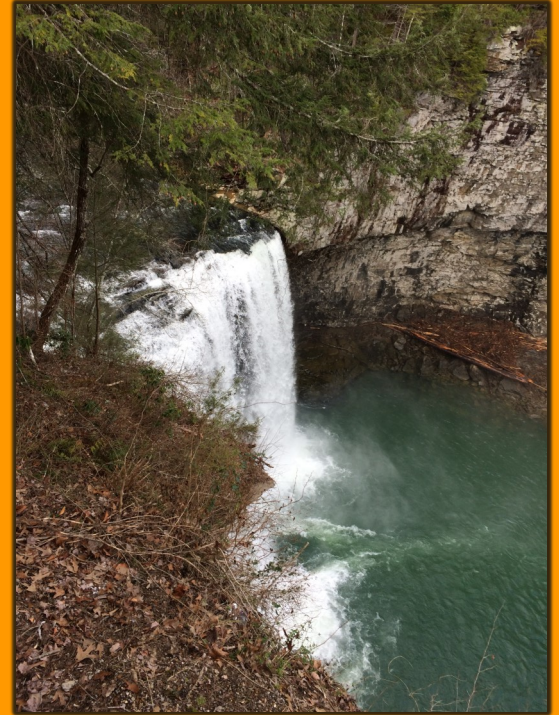
Bottom of Fall Creek Falls.



The humbling enormity of Fall Creek Falls.



Cane Creek Falls



Cane Creek Cascades

## Wagon Train Trail Hike

by Ken Cissna

Although the weather forecast was for warm weather at home, we anticipated it being chilly and windy at Brasstown Bald. Fortunately, I was having to take clothes off and then put them on as we switched from the sunny to shady side of the mountain and from leeward to windward conditions. We found that the gentle two-mile downslope to the point where you have a clear view of the Bald and its tower turned into a somewhat more difficult trek back up the trail. The tough part though, was the half mile up to the tower. Even though paved, that's a steep climb. However it is hard to beat the view from the top!



## What We Can Do

by Frank Forehand, Membership Director

Sometimes old adages provide extremely apt descriptions for current events. “March roars in like a Lion / and goes out like a lamb.” The lion roared, bringing with it the threat of a pandemic and a new, not so pleasant way of life for everyone. Now, people remain at home and businesses are shuttered. America is as quiet as it’s ever been. And so we reflect on what matters most – those closest to us -- and we ponder our hopes for the future.

Much of the BMT has been closed by the Forest Service during the pandemic, but...

Looking forward: “April Showers Bring May Flowers.” Hopefully, by the time May rolls around, the virus threat will have passed and everyone will be exchanging their “cabin fever” for **ACTIVITY!** The Benton MacKaye Trail will be the perfect venue for outdoor enjoyment and exercise!

While you’re still hibernating, start planning your future activities on the BMT! Enjoy socializing on a BMTA sponsored hike. There will be lots from which to choose – A Wildflower Hike, BMT in the Cohuttas, and more!

Maintainers definitely will enjoy their freedom to inspect and spruce their sections.

Join us on a work trip -- the second Saturday of the month for Georgia and the fourth Saturday for Tennessee / North Carolina. These are a great opportunities for much-needed exercise, socializing ... & ... those delicious Georgia “Chuck Wagon” meals at the end of the trip.

Offer to help a section maintainer spruce up his / her section. Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director Phil Guhl, [GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org); or the Tennessee / North Carolina Maintenance Director, Rick Harris, [TN-NCMaintDirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:TN-NCMaintDirector@bmtamail.org).

If you’re not a member, go here to [JOIN NOW](#). If you haven’t yet renewed your membership, go here to [RENEW NOW](#).

And, consider a donation to help BMTA volunteers maintain and protect the BMT ... as we are “... leaving a path for generations to follow.” Go here to [DONATE](#).

We also want to welcome our newest Corporate Member:

### CELEBRATE BLUE RIDGE CABIN RENTALS



[www.celebrateblueridge.com/](http://www.celebrateblueridge.com/)



## Confined to Solitary Solitude

by Kathy Williams

So here we are, confined to Solitary Solitude. Not such a bad thing, depending upon how much you like people. While I do like people (every now and then), sometimes I prefer to be left alone. Now it is socially acceptable to shun people. Not such a bad thing. I like to hike alone. I can go at my own pace. I can stop and study a weird looking tree. I can stop and wonder at a unique fungi. My solitary hikes are not a race to see how quickly I can conquer miles of trail. I can wonder and appreciate all that nature abounds in. I can be humbled by my insignificance in the grand scheme of life. I can be no one and it is so good.



## Upcoming Hikes

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules four or five hikes per month, some “leisure” hikes that are shorter and easier and some five to eight miles and of moderate difficulty. 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. Some, but not all, of our hikes are “dog friendly.” Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

These, however, are not normal times. Because hiking in the out-of-doors is good for one’s mental and physical health, we encourage BMTA members and others to continue hiking as much as possible during this national health crisis *and to do so safely*. To that end, we are continuing our hiking program and welcome people to hike with us. In the interests of safety, we have instituted some modifications that you need to know about:

1. **Only hikes that do not require shuttles are allowed** under the auspices of BMTA.
2. All hikers must drive to the meeting place and trailhead in their own cars -- no carpooling except among family members.
3. Any potential hiker who is feeling ill, has traveled within the past 14 days to a location with a significant number of cases of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) or has been exposed within the past 14 days to a person who has been confirmed as or is even suspected of having COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
4. All hikes are limited to 10 participants including the hike leader.
5. Before, during and after a hike, participants must maintain an appropriate social distance from one another (an absolute minimum of six feet).

You will see that some of the June hikes do involve shuttles—they have been left in the schedule with full awareness that plenty of time remains to change them and in hope that that won’t be necessary.

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 [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. We are in spring and the wildflowers are peeking out. Summer isn’t far away and with it the chance for some nice water hikes. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website, BMTA’s Facebook page, our various email alerts and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy!

### April

**April 15** (Wednesday) Leisure Hike: Trails of Lake Nottely.  
3 miles, easy.

Hike leader: Martha Fowler. For further information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**April 18** (Saturday) BMT: Craddock Center on 515 to Weaver Creek and return. 5 miles, easy. Two “rock hopping” stream crossings.

Hike leader: Tom Sewell. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**April 25** (Saturday) Wildcat Creek Loop. 5 miles, moderate. Beginning at Wildcat Creek Campground, much of the trail runs near Wildcat Creek.

Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**April 27** (Monday) Trillium extravaganza on the BMT north from Hudson Gap. About 6 moderate miles on the BMT from Hudson Gap to McKinney Gap toward Fowler Mountain. Magnificent fields of trillium and other spring flowers along the way. Bring your flower ID guides and cameras. High clearance vehicles are recommended from Bushy Head Gap to the trailhead.

Hike leader: Ken Cissna. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**April 28** (Tuesday) Towee Creek Loop. 6 miles, moderate. Beautiful views of the Hiawasse River in Reliance, Tennessee.

Hike leader: Clare Sullivan. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**April 29** (Wednesday) Wildflower Stroll and a picnic lunch at Mulky Gap. 1.5 miles, easy to moderate. The first stop on our itinerary is just across from the trailhead where you’ll see huge gardens of the delicate Pink Lady Slipper Orchids. We’ll then depart from the trailhead in the opposite direction for a leisurely stroll among Trillium, Wild Geranium, Wild Iris and Showy Orchis -- just a few of the spring beauties to be seen. After lunch in a forest clearing, we’ll return via the Duncan Ridge Trail to pass by vibrant Flame Azaleas as well as some huge Pink Lady Slippers. Note: If there is sufficient interest, we may have two hikes, one mid-morning and another early afternoon.

Hike leader Joy Forehand. For further information, contact [jgiftwitter@gmail.com](mailto:jgiftwitter@gmail.com).

## May

**May 2** (Saturday) BMT in the Cohuttas: Dally Gap to Spanish Oaks to Jacks River Trail to Watson Gap. 5.1 miles, moderate. 860 feet of total elevation gain; three mild stream crossings (no water shoes required).

Hike leader: Tom Sewell. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**May 2** (Saturday) Bald River Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) 9 miles, moderate.

Hike leaders Rick and Brenda Harris. For more information, contact [harrisri@aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com).



**May 6** (Wednesday) Wildflower Hike on BMT: Stanley Gap Trailhead to Rocky Mountain and return. 4.9 miles, moderate. We will enjoy a leisurely lunch atop Rocky Mountain. Along the way, Trillium and Lady Slipper gardens will provide the perfect backdrop for the hike.

Hike leader: Joy Forehand. For further information, contact [jgeftwitter@gmail.com](mailto:jgeftwitter@gmail.com).

**May 8** (Friday) BMT in the Cohuttas.  
4-5 miles, easy to moderate. Exact section to be determined.

Hike leader: Larry Dumas. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**May 16** (Saturday) BMT: Northbound from Bushy Head Gap.  
Approximately 6 miles, moderate.

Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**May 26** (Friday) Amadahy Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog)  
4-5 miles, easy-moderate.

Hike leader Ken Cissna. For further information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

## June

**June 1** (Monday) Thunder Rock Loop Trail.  
7 miles, moderate. Starting at Thunder Rock Campground, across Rhododendron Trail, up and across Bear Paw and Chestnut Mountain Trails, returning on the Thunder Rock Express.

Hike leader Evelin Yarns. For further information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**June 2** (Tuesday) Synchronous Firefly Hike.  
1-2 miles, easy. Spend an evening watching synchronous fireflies in the Great Smokey Mountain National Forest interpreted by naturalist Liz Domingue. These special fireflies light up in synchrony and are found only in the Smokies and in Thailand. The hike is recommended by members who have had this experience. This hike is limited to 15 participants and cost \$31.50 per person. Hikers need to bring a water bottle, yard chair and a flashlight with a red beam or one covered in red cellophane. Payment is due to the hike coordinator. Liz will even call for barred owls while you enjoy the light show. The hike will probably start in Gatlinburg.

Hike leader Liz Domingue. For further information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**June 6** (Saturday) BMT in the Cohuttas: From Watson Gap to Dyer Gap.  
About 5 miles, easy to moderate hiking. Requires shuttle on dirt road 4 miles.

Hike leader: Tom Sewell. For further information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**June 20 (Saturday) BMT to Ocoee Whitewater Center.**

5 miles, moderate. Watch the Ocoee River arrive at the Ocoee Whitewater Center, then shuttle to FS 221. Hike the BMT down to Thunder Rock Express to the Rhododendron Trail to the Ocoee Whitewater Center picnic area. Rhododendron should be in bloom! Completely downhill or level hiking. Bring lunch/snack and water.

Hike leader Clare Sullivan. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).

**June 22 (Monday) East Lakeshore Trail – Morganton Bridge and Wildcat Point. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE**  
(adult humans may bring a leashed dog)

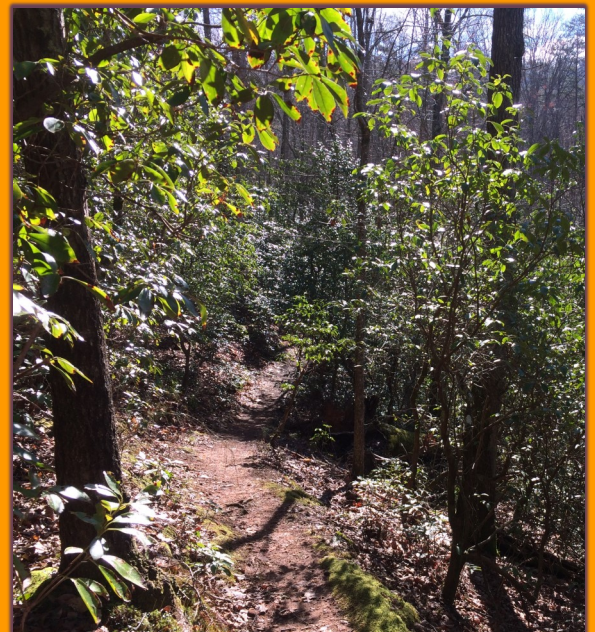
5.2 miles, easy. Shuttle.

Hike leaders Rick and Brenda Harris. For more information, contact [harrisri@aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com).

**June 26 (Friday) BMT: Lost Creek Section.**

6.5 miles, easy. Beautiful walk along Big Lost Creek. One stream crossing will probably get your feet wet so come prepared.

Hike leader: Ken Cissna. For more information, contact [hikeleader@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleader@bmtamail.org).



The deadline for the May Newsletter is April 29.



May the peace of the wilderness be upon you.