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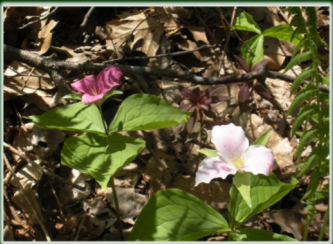
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BMTA Headquarters



"In Wilderness is the preservation of the world."

--Henry David Thoreau

Join us on a Wilderness Work Trip!

by Rick Harris

In my mind, (though of course I am biased), the 101.6 miles of the BMT as it traverses through Tennessee and North Carolina from the Ocoee River to the southern edge of the Smokies provide some of the most spectacular trail to be found anywhere east of the Mississippi.

The trail features high ridgelines, open balds with panoramic views and raging crystal clear rivers. It is solitary, yet serene, with some incredible history thrown in along the way. All this makes the BMT through Tennessee and North Carolina unique, special and a trail to fall in love with.

Because of these very factors, much of the BMT through Tennessee and North Carolina was designated as Wilderness by the US Congress. Therefore, it is regulated by the Wilderness Act of 1964. This means the area will always remain remote and untrammeled. It also means that maintenance is more difficult. Access to Wilderness sections is challenging, not only because of the steep, difficult terrain, but also because road access is limited. We sometimes must hike several miles to a site for trail work – or we use backpacking trips to access remote areas. And, we can't use chainsaws or gas-powered brushcutters! We must depend on primitive tools, such as crosscut saws, swingblades and loppers. We have to do it the way the early settlers and the logging companies of the early 1900s had to do it -- no tools with an engine.

Because this 100-plus mile stretch of trail is fairly distant from major population centers such as Atlanta, Chattanooga and Knoxville, recruiting volunteer maintainers is a greater challenge as well. But we manage. In fact, we manage quite well, in my estimation. Not to say we couldn't use more volunteers. We welcome all volunteers.

Let me fill you in on how we do it. I am the overall TN/NC Maintenance Director. It's a job I love and I want to see it done right. I have two capable assistants – Dick Evans and Steve Cartwright. In addition, we have numerous Section Maintainers, each of whom is responsible for a three to six mile segment of the BMT. Whether a solo maintainer or co-maintaining with a spouse, friend or co-worker, they keep their sections brushed and logged out and report major issues to me. Interim trips are used to respond to an urgent need such as a large blowdown completely blocking the trail.

For major projects (huge blowdowns or extensive tread repair), we have at least one work trip on the fourth Saturday of each month. Many are led by the Section Maintainer – a great way for these folks to learn how to manage a work trip – and – to become the maintenance leaders of tomorrow.

We also treat our maintainers quite well. Trail Workers earning 30 hours per year are awarded a 30-Hour Maintainer's T-Shirt. Those earning 100 hours or more receive the prestigious 100 Hours Club award – both presented at the Annual Meeting and Hike Fest. After a work trip, we frequently go to a local restaurant for some great camaraderie and a sit-down meal. Admittedly, COVID-19 has made these after-trip get-togethers rather difficult.

Training for trail workers is a priority -- chainsaw and crosscut certification, First Aid/CPR and crew leader training. Due to COVID-19, this training has been on hold. We hope to get back on track in the next few months.

What are the benefits of joining us on work trips or becoming a Section Maintainer?

- ◆ The camaraderie.
- ◆ The physical exercise -- great for our body, soul and psyche!
- ◆ Contributing to making our world a better place.
- ◆ The experience with woodland tools.
- ◆ Learning how to use a chainsaw or crosscut saw safely and effectively.
- ◆ Learning how to lead a crew on a work trip.
- ◆ Learning about the history of the Cherokee and early settlers –as well as logging and subsistence living in the mountains.
- ◆ The Paul Bunyan macho aspect -- you become more confident in your abilities.
- ◆ The experience of being out there in the wilds, away from your home and all that goes with it -- beeping car horns, all those people, all those responsibilities.
- ◆ A time to renew your spirit by hiking on a beautiful trail with high balds and raging rivers. Maybe seeing a bear, wild boar, deer, bald eagle, rattlesnake, copperhead, coyote, bobcat or a red-tailed hawk.
- ◆ The fun of it all!

What are the downsides of volunteering?

- ◆ Your spouse and kids might miss you (Bring them along – we have a job for everyone)!
- ◆ You might be sore that night (a good excuse for that extra glass of wine).
- ◆ You might get too hot or too cold or fall in a river (been there, done that -- several times), twist an ankle, etc. But these make great stories for your grandkids.
- ◆ You might miss your favorite TV show or miss that football or basketball game. That's what DVRs are for, right?
- ◆ You might be bitten by a rattlesnake, eaten by a bear or stung by yellow jackets. But your tombstone can say something cool, like, "He died doing what he loved to do. Too bad the bear was hungry that day."

So, if you're interested in helping in Tennessee or North Carolina, contact me, [Rick Harris](#) - [Steve Cartwright](#) or [Dick Evans](#).

For Georgia, contact [Bob Cowdrick](#).

There are a few unadopted sections of the BMT. If you want to check that out, I can work with you to find the section that fits you best. I'll take you out on the section and fill you in on all the ropes.

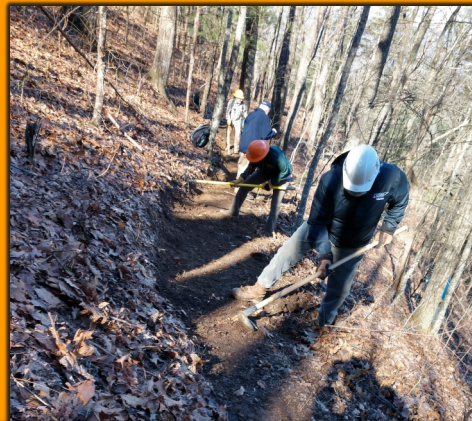
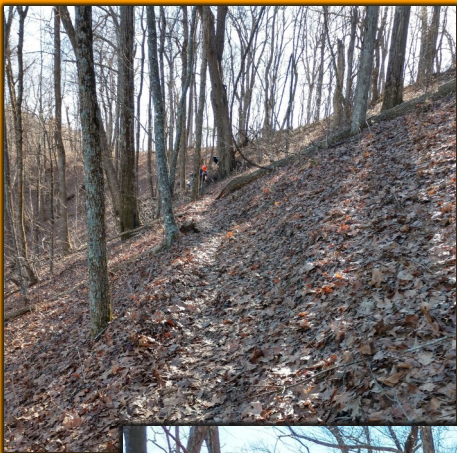
Hope to see you soon!



Ocoee District Trail Maintenance BMT Section 12b - Dry Pond Lead to Deep Gap

by Ken Jones

Although the temperature were in the upper twenties, we had nine trail volunteers who showed up ready to work. That temperature went down as we made our way to the Little Frog Wilderness portal sign on the top of the ridge. It went down even more when the brutal wind hit us. Luckily, we were able to warm up by hiking uphill to the work site and by digging to repair the tread. Thanks to the hard work of the crew, we were able to complete all of the tread repair that was necessary, about 1200'. This section of the BMT was cleared of blow-downs last month and with the tread repair is now ready for spring hikers!



Ocoee District Trail Maintenance BMT Section 14a - FS 22B to Unicoi Trail

by Lynette Lynn

A second Tennessee crew worked Section 14a. This section is now completely logged out. We finished 500 feet of tread work 1.7 miles in, as well as two water diversions. Of concern and reported, are the gates at the trailhead on Highway 68 which have been down since November. There is some dumping in the area right off the highway as well.



Valentines in the Mists

by Carolyn Sewell

On February 14 our group battled the fog at Fort Mountain State Park to hike various trails down to and around the lake. Although the weather wasn't perfect, we had an enjoyable time. Our second leg of the hike was to the Overlook and Fire Tower. The Overlook offered beautiful views of... fog. However, the trip to the Fire Tower with its romantic story was rewarding. The history of the serpentine wall fascinated all. Return trips (on a better day) are definitely planned.



Save the Dates!

November 12-14, 2021

BMTA Hike Fest and Annual Meeting

Unicoi Lodge - Helen, GA

For reservations call (800) 573-9659.

To receive your discount -

Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!

Georgia Sections 1 and 2a Trail Maintenance Day

by Bob Cowdrick with photos courtesy of Patrick Ward, Dave Ricker and Mike Pilvinsky

It was not what I expected. It was not what I planned for. But the BMTA members and guests did not let me down.

What was forecasted to be a miserable, cold, rainy day did not hold true. After starting the safety briefing with a brief rain shower, the clouds dispersed, the rain ceased and we were able complete some badly needed work on water diversions and bridge rails.



The work involved a team of six merry maintainers led by Barry Allen. They returned to the Long Creek Boardwalk on Section 2a to finish installing the rails on the walkway.

Two other crews of six each made a second attempt on cleaning out water diversions on Section 1a. These crews were led by George Owen, David Blount, Darcy Douglas and Ken Cissna.

This was a project that was originally scheduled for January but was cancelled due to a Forest Service District shutdown.

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The numbers were... 138.5 volunteer hours of effort, 60+ water diversions cleaned out, two boardwalk rails installed and one BMT hiker who is now interested joining us on the next workday.

A special shout out to our first-time attendees: Dylan, our Boy Scout guest (soon to be an Eagle Scout in April), Harrison, our Young Harris Outdoor Education Major guest (soon to be a college grad in May) and Zheer, our USDA Intern (soon to be an AT thru hiker in June).

We kicked off at 9:00 AM, were done by 1:00 PM and enjoyed the snacks and refreshments provided by Sue Ricker and Debra Guhl.

A friendly reminder that our next trail workday will be Saturday March 13, 2021. Watch for the announcement.



 **Time to Renew!**
Use this link to Renew Now:
Membership

Big Frog Wilderness Overnight Work Trip

by Bob Cowdrick

On February 20, we assembled a merry group of maintainers for an overnight trip into the Big Frog Wilderness. Connor Bayliss brought along his UGA Alumni Crew Team friends Grant Slone, Howell Buot and Charlie Rittenhouse. Big Frog Wilderness Guide James Anderson and hiking friend Buddy Arnold also joined us for the trip. The final touch was the dedicated crosscut crew members of Barry Allen, Shane Morrison, Steve Bayliss and me.

In James' post Hurricane Zeta survey in November 2020, he reported 13 trees in his section alone that needed attention. Foolish me, I chose the coldest weekend in February to schedule the work trip, with temperatures dipping below 20 degrees Saturday night.



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No, we were not alone on the trail. We were passed by a group of senior trail runners, one hiker in a t-shirt and shorts (who was “trying out some new gear”), the trail running gals from Chattanooga and four other hikers who spent the night at the top of Big Frog Mountain.

The numbers speak for themselves...

175.5 Volunteer Hours – WOW!

40 Blowdowns Removed - fantastic job.

20 degree (or lower) cold clear night - survived.

5 Incredible Guests who joined us - thanks again!

3 Stream crossing – quite chilly.

1 Outstanding campfire - truly appreciated.

0 Injuries



This was our Second Annual Big Frog February trip. It may become a future tradition!



Join or Renew Your BMTA Membership Today!

Leave a footpath for generations to follow.

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On Thick Ice

by Patrick Ward aka "patman"

The occasion has never presented itself for me to try my skills ice fishing. Having read enough Garrison Keillor and heard a few accounts of the activity I do know you want the ice thick! Not so much the case when you want to drive up a Forest Service road in the dead of winter to a parking location for hiking and trail maintenance in the Georgia mountains. Anyone who has ever taken the single track, roller-coaster Forest Service road from Dyer Gap to parking near Flat Top Mountain is keenly aware of the challenging drive in the best of weather conditions. Add the cycling of sub-freezing temps, partial thawing, some winter precipitation, a 40-foot-high rock face with a northern exposure covered in enormous icicles and the volatile mix puts you on "On Thick Ice". Wished this had been an "on thin ice" issue. It was not.

After receiving reports of two blowdowns, Barry Allen, Shane Morrison and "patman" headed out Saturday, February 2, to perform a "trail patrol" between Double Hogpen Gap and Fowler Mountain. We thought we would have a pleasant day strolling down the BMT. About an eighth of a mile from the Flat Top Mountain parking area, we encountered 50 feet of thick ice on the steep roadbed. Barry's truck started slipping and heading to the downhill edge. We knew quickly there was some real work to be done. We all took turns dulling Barry's freshly sharpened ax to chip out two solid tracks to avoid sliding off the mountain and gain traction to higher ground. After one hour of work we were able to get Barry's truck and Shane's jeep across the dangerous ice. We did have a great day on the trail. We were glad we warmed up with the ice axing because we had 13 blowdowns and jumbles to move off the trail. The "trail patrol" had become a substantial workday.



Continued next page



The hike back out from Fowler Mountain was pleasant. In the last mile we were treated to a wintery mix of snow and sleet to fully culminate the experience. Since a great deal of the ice had melted during the day the drive out was very uneventful. Note to self – when driving the Forest Service roads in the depth of winter, add to your emergency kit an old axe that does not mind thick ice and rocks!

Brawley and Toccoa

by Tom Sewell with photos by Suzanne Zuckerman



Nine hikers lucked into a great day for a hike to Brawley Mountain. Most of us usually hike this portion of the BMT from Wilscot Gap on Hwy 60. We decided to try it from the lesser used site on Old Dial Road near the Toccoa River. It is a little more of a climb but lacks the frequent rocky sections from Wilscot Gap. We were rewarded for the climb with numerous mountain views as we made our way on the skyline ridges. Out of breath climbs and breathtaking vistas!



Meet Lynette Linn - New Section Maintainer

Lynette Linn is the BMTA's new Section Maintainer for 14a (FS 22B » Unicoi Mt Trail/TN Hwy 68). Currently from the Atlanta area, she wanted a section that would make the several hour trek worth it. Good highway access, a length of four miles ... and ... great camping possibilities made section 14a an easy choice for Linn.

Always an outdoor person, Linn ran cross country and track in high school. As a member of the Civil Air Patrol and various ROTC programs, she gained expertise in survival backpacking and search and rescue -- including the all-important art of reading maps.

An Army Veteran, Linn was stationed in Afghanistan. Upon her return to the States, cross country races again peaked her interest. She volunteered to help with an Ultra horse race. While working with the event, she learned about the Ultra Running Community and began to participate in trail races. "Fifty K is my limit," said Linn who frequently volunteers to help with Ultra races such as the Georgia Death Race.

Linn also wanted to do her part to give back to the community. "I like having a section because I can work on it on my time. I'm active and have a lot of hobbies. By having a section, I can do a part -- my part -- when I have time for it."

"You can't be everywhere," Linn continued. "When I'm not taking care of my section, it gives me the freedom to really enjoy the forest and all that goes with it."

Linn said she chose the Benton MacKaye Trail because the BMT is what the AT was 20 – 30 years ago. The BMT offers a rare and wonderful wilderness experience.

"I truly enjoy the work trips and meeting everyone. I'm excited to see people so active and working toward a common goal. Also, I learn a little about life along the way!" said Linn.



BMTA Corporate Members

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Yonah Mountain's stunning vista. Photo courtesy of Steve Dennison

Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Tom Sewell, Hiking Director

Guidelines for Our Hikes

- ◆ Only hikes that do not require shuttles are allowed under the auspices of BMTA.
- ◆ All hikers must drive to the meeting place and trailhead in their own cars -- no carpooling except among family members.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ All hikes are limited to a maximum of 10 participants—hike leaders may impose even lower limits.

Before, during, and after a hike, participants must maintain an appropriate distance from one another (an absolute minimum of six feet—but 10 or 15 or 20 is much better).

March

March 10 (Wednesday) Thunder Rock Express to Chestnut Mountain Trail to BMT down to Thunder Rock Campground. Moderate 6.5 miles. Hike leader Evelin Yarns. For more information contact hikeleaderEY@bmtamail.org.

March 12 (Friday) BMT from GA Hwy 60 and FS 816 to Licklog Mountain and return. Strenuous 7.9 miles. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.



March 13 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 3a, 3b and 3c — GA 60 >> Skeenah Gap. Sections 2b (No Name Gap » Bryson Gap) and 2d (Toccoa River » GA Hwy 60). Removing blowdowns, tread repair and root ball restoration along the trail. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org.

March 17 (Wednesday) Caney Creek Historical Community. Moderate 7 miles. Hike to the abandoned historical community of Caney Creek on the Ocoee River (one large creek crossing). See lots of artifacts. This tiny town had mass transit, bathtubs, electric street lights, concrete sidewalks, a tennis court, hotel, telephones, school and a church, but no stores. It existed from 1918-1941. No automobiles ever travelled there. For more information Google Caney Creek, TN. Be prepared for an hour's drive on FS Rd 221 in the Cherokee National Forest. Hike leader Clare Sullivan. For more information contact hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org.

March 24 (Wednesday) Cartecay Track Trails in Ellijay. Moderate 5.5 miles will include a couple miles of newly developed trail along the Cartecay River. Two shallow creek crossings. Great river views and even a visit to the archery range featuring local and exotic wildlife decoys. Hike leader Carolyn Sewell. For more information contact hikeleaderCS@bmtamail.org.



March 27 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Section 12d - McFarland >> White Oak Flats, FS 103; Section 12e - FS 103 >> trestle. For more information contact Boe Rudder boe.r.rudder@gmail.com.

March 30 (Tuesday) BMT in Cherry Log Community from Hwy 515 to Rock Shelter and return. Moderate 4 miles with a 435' elevation change. Hike leader Martha Fowler. For more information contact hikeleaderMF@bmtamail.org.

April

April 2 (Friday) Sawnee, Cumming, Georgia. Moderate 5-mile loop with an 860' elevation gain. This is a newer and less used section of the Preserve. Hike Leader Howard Baggett. For more information contact hikeleaderHB@bmtamail.org.

April 2 (Friday) BMT Bushyhead Gap north to Hatley Gap in the Cohuttas for a special hike. Moderately strenuous 10.8 miles round-trip. Since social distancing is essential, it's the perfect time to hike a section of the BMT as a "moving meditation." Elevation gain in -- approximately 900'; out -- approximately 600'. We will be spaced further apart and walking independently at times. At our destination, we will have plenty of time for snacks and a rest. We will enjoy a short "Forest Bathing" meditation before returning to the trailhead. Limited to 5 people. Hike leader Collin Chambers. For more information contact hikeleaderCC@bmtamail.org.

April 4 (Sunday) BMT Dyer Gap on FS 64 south to the headwaters of the Jacks River near Flat Top Mountain in the Cohuttas for a special hike. Moderately strenuous 4.8 miles round-trip. Elevation gain is: 900'. Since social distancing is essential, it's the perfect time to hike a section of the BMT as a "moving meditation." We will be spaced further apart and walking independently at times. At our destination, we will have plenty of time for snacks and a rest. We will enjoy a short "Forest Bathing" meditation before returning to the trailhead. Limited to 5 people. Hike leader Collin Chambers. For more information contact hikeleaderCC@bmtamail.org.



April 10 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 4a,b. Skenah Gap > Wilscot Gap. Logout, brushout and tread repair. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org.

April 12 (Monday) Cloudland Canyon State Park. Moderate to strenuous 6 miles. Each hike has 400' elevation change. It's a little bit further drive than most of us do but the 2-mile round-trip Waterfalls Trail and 4.8-mile West Rim Trail that includes one additional waterfall at Cloudland Canyon are impressive in the spring. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

April 13 (Tuesday) Go Forth Creek near Ducktown, Tennessee. Easy 3.7 miles out and back. It follows along a pretty creek the whole way and there should be lots of wildflowers to spot. The parking is very limited so only five or six cars can fit in. If you are coming with someone in the same car, let me know so I can allow for more people to come. The trail is 4 miles from the Ocoee Whitewater Center so when we finish Go Forth Creek, we can hike the one-mile rhododendron trail if we have time. Hike leader Martha Fowler. For more information contact hikeleaderMF@bmtamail.org.

April 15 (Thursday) Hike to the Southern side of "The Narrows" on the Hiwassee River via the abandoned community of McFarland. Moderate 6 miles. Four miles will be along railroad tracks. Prepare to drive 6 miles on a FS road. See the extinct town of McFarland, TN established in 1895. It served as a section headquarters for maintenance on the Old Line Railroad. The town had a post office, general store and a two-story home. Many railroad workers lived there. FS personnel working the newly created Cherokee National Forest stayed in the hotel. Two large, interesting concrete structures built in the 1940s to support the Appalachian Dam and powerhouse construction remain. Hike Leader Larry Jarkovsky. Coordinator Clare Sullivan. For more information contact hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org.

April 16 (Friday) Deep Gap to Fall Branch Falls on the Stanley Gap and Benton MacKaye Trails. Strenuous 10.4-mile round-trip with 1,200 foot elevation change in both directions. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

April 23 (Friday) Wildcat Creek-Turner Trail Loop with side trip to Rocky Ford cascades. Approximately 7 miles with brief steep segments. A few lady slippers were found on the trail in 2020. Hiking poles recommended. Trail located in GA Wildlife Management Area. Involves carrying a free GA GA Lifetime Sportsman license for Georgia residents over 65 or obtain a permit through the GA Department of Natural Resources. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.



April 24 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Sections 15b,c. Tate Gap to Sandy Gap. Log-out, brushout and refresh blazes.

For more information contact Rick Parks Rickafur1@gmail.com.

April 26 (Monday) Park Creek/Park Ridge Trails, Standing Indian area near Franklin, North Carolina. Moderate 5 miles with several creek crossings. There will be beautiful spring flowers to admire. Hike Leader Evelin Yarns. For more information contact hikeleaderEY@bmtamail.org.

April 28 (Wednesday) Lady Slippers! Mulky Gap, Blairsville. Easy to moderate 1.5 miles. Before embarking on the hike, hikers will go across the road to see a huge garden of thousands of Pink Lady Slippers. The hike itself begins on an old logging road. Trillium, Showy Orcus, Wild Geranium, Wild Iris and Dutchman's Pipe are just a few of the spring beauties to be seen. For the return, we'll switch to the Duncan Ridge Trail along which are Flame Azaleas as well as some super-size Pink Lady Slippers. Hike leaders Joy and Frank Forehand. For more information contact hikeleaderJF@bmtamail.org.

May



May 1 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Brookshire Creek Tail Section 16c. Annual log-out and brushout.

For more information contact Rick Harris, tn-ncmaintdirector@bmtamail.org.

May 5 (Wednesday) Lady Slipper Hike: BMT at Weaver Creek, Blue Ridge. Moderate to strenuous 3.8 miles. This will be a SLOW, LEISURELY hike to enjoy the wildflowers. Initially we'll pass by beautiful Mountain Laurel groves peppered with Flame Azaleas. Stop for a leisurely lunch at the water cutoff beside some of the largest Lady Slippers on this section. As we stroll back to the trailhead, we'll pass numerous gardens of the pink beauties. Hike leaders Joy and Frank Forehand. For more information contact hikeleaderJF@bmtamail.org.



May 8 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Wilscot Gap >Dial Road.
Logout, brushout and tread repair. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick
GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org.

May 14 (Friday) Rocktown Trail near Lafayette, GA – Moderate 4 miles. Maze of large, oddly shaped sandstone-conglomerate boulders atop Pigeon Mountain and a short waterfall trail enroute. Waterfall more likely to have water in the spring. Rocktown Trail is located within a GA Wildlife Management Area. Involves carrying a free GA Lifetime Sportsman license for Georgia residents over 65 or obtain a permit through the GA Department of Natural Resources. Approximately 4 miles total depending on how many boulders you want to climb. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.



May 22 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Sycamore Creek Trail. Section 17a-b. Annual logout and refresh blazes. For more information contact Pam and Kent Mathews pam-elahallmathews@yahoo.com.

May 24 (Monday) Turtletown Creek Falls near Farner, TN. Moderate 4.5-mile round-trip hike to two of the prettiest waterfalls in the area. Hiking poles recommended. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.



**The deadline for the April Newsletter is Wednesday, March 31.
You may email your articles to Kathy Williams [HERE](#).
Thank you!**