



<http://www.bmta.org/>

## Points of Interest

Click the title to go directly to the page.

[Hiker's Delight](#)

[Scenic Day Hikes](#)

[Least Expect It](#)

[Shadow Falls](#)

[Things We Should Carry](#)

[Will Work](#)

[On a Mission](#)

[Starting the New Year](#)

[Thunder Rock](#)

[Upcoming](#)

[Save the Dates](#)



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**BMTA Headquarters**



# Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 40, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2023

## The BMT – A Day Hiker's Delight

by Joy Forehand

Whether you are out for a brief hike with the kids; are interested in a leisurely stroll through the woods; or you want a more challenging hike of 6-10 miles, the BMT has a great day hike for you.

### GEORGIA

**Fall Branch Falls** – Located in the Gilmer/Fannin counties' area, kids will love sprinting up and down the trail on the short half-mile hike to a striking waterfall. Emerald green rhododendrons line the glistening whitewater that rushes down a 100' rock cliff. For a longer, more strenuous hike, continue north on the BMT for about two miles to Rocky Mountain where you'll find the perfect setting for lunch or a snack – surrounded by great views of the valleys below. [Learn More.](#)

**Long Creek Falls** – It's an easy two-mile round-trip hike on a rhododendron-lined trail to a waterfall with glistening whitewater rushing down a 50-foot sheer rock cliff. [Learn More.](#)

**Owen Vista** – The stunning overlook is just 0.4 of a mile south of the Big Stamp Gap Trailhead. It offers breath-taking views to the southeast of the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountain Range. For a longer hike, continue south on the BMT for 1.3 miles. You'll pass the bronze plaque honoring Benton MacKaye for whom the trail is named and turn around at the southern terminus of the BMT on Springer Mountain (3.4 miles round trip). [Learn More.](#)

**Suspension Bridge Over the Toccoa River** – The 260-foot suspension footbridge over the Toccoa River is said to be the longest suspension bridge in Georgia. Families with young children and seniors may prefer the four-mile drive on Forest Road 816 to a parking area located a quarter mile from the bridge. For those preferring a longer and more challenging trek with awesome views, the bridge is a 7.0-mile round-trip hike from the trailhead on GA HWY 60. [Learn More.](#)

**Lady Slipper Hike** – The Weaver Creek section of the BMT is the place to be for colorful spring flowers. A fairly strenuous four-mile round trip hike, the section features elegant pink lady slipper orchids, apple-tree size mountain laurel covered in delicate white blossoms, huge flame azaleas, trillium, dwarf-crested iris and more! [Learn More.](#)

**Shadow Falls** – A well-hidden jewel in the lush forest of the Cohuttas, cascades of whitewater rush down a rocky cliff. It's a short, one-mile hike from the Dyer Gap Trailhead. Go north on the BMT from Dyer Gap. Head south on the South Fork Trail to Shadow Falls. For a longer, more challenging in-and-out hike, return to the BMT and continue north. [Learn More.](#)

Continued next page

## TENNESSEE

**Whigg Meadow** – Bring the family and your dog to a picnic lunch on a wide-open bald on the top of the world. Just 1.6 miles from the Mud Gap Trailhead, scrumptious blueberries and blackberries (in season) are an added bonus. [Learn More.](#)

**Lost Creek** – One of the most beautiful hikes on the BMT, this is a great kid and dog-friendly trek near Reliance, TN. The trail is right next to the creek, and kids and dogs can play below gentle waterfalls in a limestone gorge. Because it follows an old roadbed most of the way, the 2.7-mile trek is easy hiking. [Learn More.](#)

**Hiwassee River** – The Hiwassee River has been described as one of the most gorgeous rivers in the Appalachians. Begin your hike at the Childers Creek Trailhead, heading upstream to the Towee Creek parking area. The length of your hike is up to you. The first three miles take you along the edge of the river and around a rocky point at the half-way point – a perfect picnic spot. Further upstream, there is a campsite with an inviting swimming beach when the water is low. The last 1.3 miles take you up on the side of a ridge with great views of the river valley below. The 8.6-mile hike is best done with a shuttle but you can make it a six-mile hike if you turn around at the Big Bend parking area. [Learn More.](#)

## NORTH CAROLINA

**Old Field Gap Road to Tapoco Lodge** – For a less rigorous route for this two-mile hike, begin at the Old Field Gap Road Trailhead heading south towards Tapoco Lodge. The trail features several scenic overlooks of mountains in the distance and the valley far below. A relaxing lunch at the lodge is the hiker's reward at the end of the day. [Learn More.](#)

**Fontana Village to Fontana Marina** – This is an easy 2.9-mile hike with occasional views of Lake Fontana. [Learn More.](#)

**Fontana Village to Lookout Rock** – The trek is a wonderful 1.5-mile round trip day hike, but it is *strenuous* – a portion of the climb is aptly named the Stairway to Heaven! The views from Lookout Rock are incredible and well worth the effort. [Learn More.](#)

## GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

**Lakeshore Trail** – One of the best places to pick up the Lakeshore Trail is shortly after you cross the impressive 480-foot-tall Fontana Dam and head into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It's a beautiful trail that winds its way through the forest above Fontana Lake. The length of the hike is your choice ... just keep in mind this needs to be an "in-and-out" excursion. [Learn More.](#)

**Tunnel on the Road to Nowhere** – Enjoy a six-mile drive on a scenic byway to arrive at the tunnel. The quarter-mile long passageway was to be part of a relocated route to Deals Gap for residents of Swain County displaced by the then new Fontana Lake. Environmental issues prevented the rest of the route from being completed. Once you pass through the tunnel, enjoy a hike on the BMT. Your trek can be short and leisurely ... or ... you can embark on a longer, more challenging backpacking excursion all the way to Smokemont (26.5 miles). The choice is yours, but it will probably need to be an in-and-out hike. [Learn More.](#)

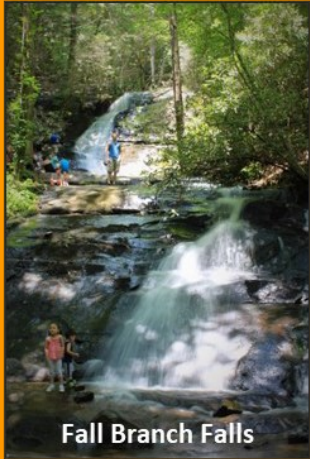
The Benton MacKaye Trail Association also offers sponsored hikes that are open to the public. For upcoming hikes, go to [Events](#). To learn about other backpacking hikes, thru hikes and even more day hikes on the BMT, go to [bmta.org](http://bmta.org).

If you have questions about these great hiking opportunities, contact Hiking Director Kelly Motter at [hikeleaderKM@bmtaemail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKM@bmtaemail.org).

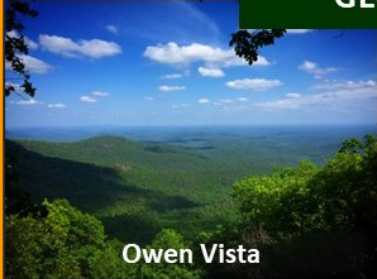


# Scenic Day Hikes on the Benton MacKaye Trail

## GEORGIA



Fall Branch Falls



Owen Vista



Long Creek Falls



Bridge Over the Toccoa River



Shadow Falls

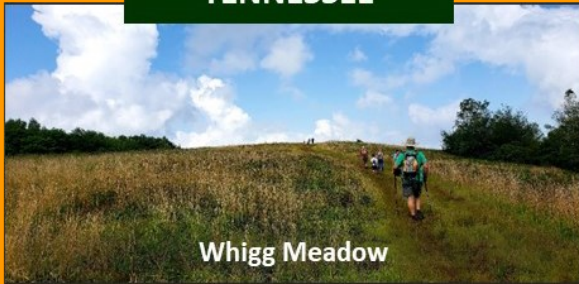


Weaver Creek

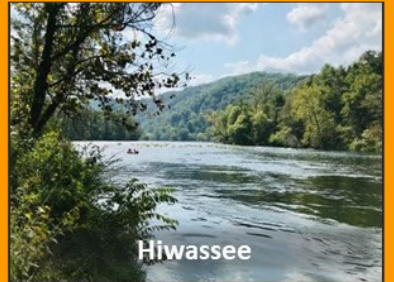
## TENNESSEE



Lost Creek

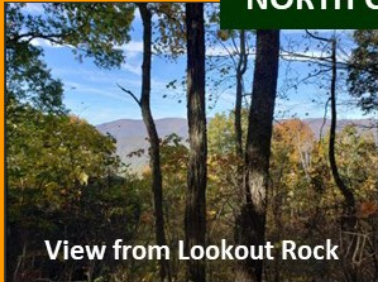


Whigg Meadow



Hiwassee

## NORTH CAROLINA



View from Lookout Rock



Fontana Dam

## GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK



Lakeshore Trail



Fontana Lake



Tunnel on the Road to Nowhere



## When You Least Expect It....

by Bob Cowdrick

When I planned this January GA Work Trip weeks ago, I never would have expected it to:

- ◆ Be snowing with 25-degree temps and gusty winds
- ◆ Have icy roads and driveways that prevented members from attending
- ◆ Compete for parking space with a trail race
- ◆ Have the white flags marking the water diversion blend in with the snow on the ground
- ◆ Be passed by a trail runner wearing shorts and a T-shirt
- ◆ Have the USFS deliver snacks

Not what I was expecting but it did happen - and we accomplished a lot.

Steve Pruett led a crew of seven including Dale Clark, Bob Cowdrick, Steve Dennison, Kelly Motter, John Oudin and Dave Ricker across the Suspension Bridge to clean out 28 water diversions he had previously flagged. He had a detailed plan on the work that needed to be done and the crew made it happen.



Dale Clark, Steve Pruett, Dave Ricker, Kelly Motter, John Oudin and Steve Dennison ready, willing and able!

Continued next page





Dale Clark, Steve Pruett and John Oudin make sure to get it right.



Forging a path.

Darcy Douglas led the re-route crew. Katie Fox and Dmitry Korneev joined her as first-time attendees.

The rest of the crew included Nelson Ashbrook, Joe Cantwell, Ken Cissna, Ian Guttridge, Chris Lauchner, Daphne Martin, Kenny Martin, Madison Martin, Andy Meeks, Shane Morrison, Bob Nelson, Carol Nufer, Michael Rosenberg and Patrick Ward.

Douglas' crew of 17 dug 750 new feet of trail on a very steep Rhodes Mountain.

Myranda Hagemann, our USFS Trail Tech, surprised us all with an end-of-the-day visit and an arm full of snacks!

She has been instrumental in the re-route on Rhodes and we appreciate all of the work she does for us.





Let the numbers speak for themselves:

- ◆ 750 feet of re-route completed
- ◆ 159 volunteer hours
- ◆ 24 members and guests attended
- ◆ 28 water diversions dug
- ◆ 2 first-time attendees participated
- ◆ 0 injuries

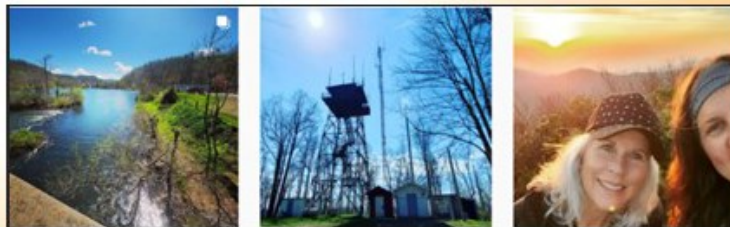
This was an outstanding effort on what proved to be a “not what I expected” January day.

Please consider joining us on our next work trip on Saturday, February 10, 2023!

Who knows what adventures we will have!



**BMTA HAS A NEW INSTAGRAM PAGE!**



**For the Best Pics of the BMT**

Follow Us — [#official\\_benton\\_mackaye\\_trail/](#)

[BMTA Instagram Photo Submissions](#)



## Upper Shadow and Lower Shadow Falls

by Steve Dennison

Steve Dennison led hikers on a quest to discover "Lower Shadow Falls" - only 100 feet away from the "Upper Shadow Falls". Water was running high after all the recent rain. Below are member Vicki Yunker and guest (but soon to be member) Lisa Potts.



**Your Membership Dues Help Us  
Preserve, Protect and Maintain the BMT**

**Please Join or Renew Your Membership Now!**

**[MEMBERSHIP](#)**

*...leave a footpath for generations to follow!*



# Things We Should Carry

## Pocket Knife

by Bob Cowdrick

A pocket knife is a small folding knife that can be carried in a pocket or in a pack. It typically has one or more blades that can be locked into place when open and a handle that can be folded to protect the blades when closed.



Pocket knives can be used for a variety of tasks, such as cutting rope or opening packages and are often carried by hikers, campers and trail maintainers.

Some pocket knives also have additional tools such as a can opener, nail file or scissors built into the handle.

There are many popular brands of knives Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) hikers carry including Gerber, Swiss Army and Duluth.

My favorite trail knife is a Buck 110 knife which I have owned since 1972.

Founded in 1902 by Hoyt Buck, the company is known for its folding pocket knives, fixed blade knives and hunting knives. These knives are constructed of durable materials like high-carbon steel and Diamondwood handle. They are also known for their patented "Buck Knife" lock mechanism.

I use my knife frequently while on the trail. Consider including it in your trail pack!

BMTA's Georgia Maintenance Director, Bob Cowdrick, is a popular outdoor author.

BMTAers have enjoyed Cowdrick's books *Trail Tales* and *Trail Tales 100: Tools, Tips, and Techniques to Improve Your Hiking Experience*

**Topic for BMTA's March Newsletter will be "Carabiners".**





# Will Work for Friends and Food Tennessee Work Trip

Photos by Mary Alton, Daphne Martin and Patty Masters



Continued next page







## On A Mission

by Bob Cowdrick

Hikers fall into three categories. Casual hikers are out for a day hike and rarely stray far from the trailhead. Backpackers are individuals who want to hike farther, typically carrying their food and supplies with them while hiking for multiple days. Thru hikers are hikers who are determined to hike an entire trail such as the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), Appalachian Trail (AT), or Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) in one trip. These individuals are on a mission!

Thru hikers come from throughout the United States and the world to hike these trails. Some are recent high school or college graduates looking to experience the trail before embarking on a career. Others are recently retired and anxious to fulfill a lifelong dream. Their mission is to finish the trail and celebrate their achievement at the monument marking the trail's terminus. Even for seasoned thru hikers, attaining this goal may present a significant challenge.

A thru hiker of the 288-mile-long BMT will travel at an average rate of 10-20 miles per day, completing the trail in 15-30 days. They frequently take a much-needed rest day to restock food supplies, shower and do laundry.

For several years, I have volunteered on summer trail crews with organizations such as the Maine Appalachian Trail Association, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation and the Washington Trail Association. Working with these groups, I learn new trail building techniques, experience new trail maintenance challenges and enjoy building friendships with other maintainers.



Soybean

I've met many thru hikers while maintaining trails on the BMT, AT, Continental Divide Trail (CDT) and PCT. Regardless of where I met them, these individuals are driven to hike the entire trail in a season. They definitely appreciate the work the crews do such as cutting out blowdowns, cleaning water bars, clearing heavy brush, etc. to provide a clear path for hikers to follow.

Each thru hiker has a trail name he uses when meeting others and signing logbooks. Some choose a name before starting the journey. Most wait to be "dubbed" with their trail name by other hikers. A trail name may be based on where they are from or their physical appearance. Soybean was from Iowa. Stringbean was a tall, lanky fellow.



When encountering a work crew, most hikers say a quick ‘hello’ or ‘thank you’ and are on their way. Some inquire about the weather forecast. Others take a break, drop their packs and chat with the volunteers.

While working on building puncheons through the muck of the CDT, three 20-year-old hikers stopped at our worksite for a break. The trio was on a mission to finish the CDT at the Canadian border in 10 days – hopefully, before the first snowfall. Yet they had plenty of time to stop to chat with our crew. We ceremoniously let each of them drive a spike into the puncheon’s decking and made them honorary CDT trail maintainers.

Thru hikers commit significant time, resources and money to hike these trails. Thermometer was a CDT thru hiker I met on the trail when I was working in Montana. He was from South Korea and had flown to the United States to hike the PCT. When he arrived in California, he learned the deep snow in the Sierras was preventing hikers from traveling along the PCT. He switched to a thru hike of the CDT, beginning his trek at the Mexican border heading north to Canada. He had a small thermometer on his pack. When I asked for his trail name, he pointed to the thermometer. The language barrier did not stop him from letting me know his trail name was Thermometer. On that cold and rainy day, he was by himself with no other hikers for miles around. But he was on a mission to complete the CDT.

There are several thru/section hikes that include the BMT. Anyone who has completed one of these hikes is eligible to receive a complimentary patch and rocker. To learn more, go to [Completion Report](#). If you have completed your hike, select ‘COMPLETION REPORT & REQUEST FOR LISTING’.



## Thru/Section Hikes that Include the BMT

### BMT

288-mile long Benton MacKaye Trail

### AT/BMT Loop

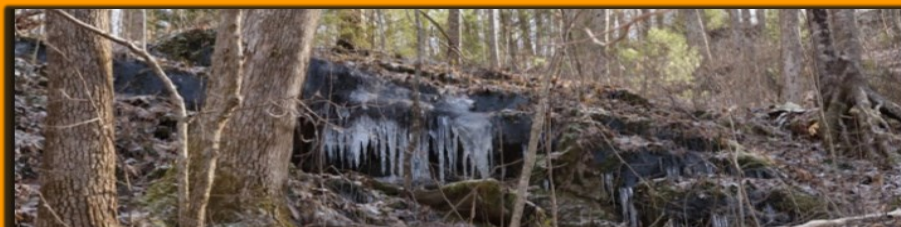
The 500+ mile figure-eight is formed by the BMT and the southern section of the AT between Springer Mountain and the BMT’s northern terminus at Big Creek (using the BMT/AT connector at the north end of the Smokies – the Chestnut Branch Trail).

### 1,000-Mile Challenge

The AT (Davenport Gap >> Springer Mountain). The Chestnut Branch Trail (Big Creek >> Davenport Gap) is used to connect the AT and BMT.

The BMT (Springer Mountain >> Big Creek)

The Pinhoti National Recreation Trail (PNRT) (Flagg Mountain >> the intersection with the BMT near Dyer Gap).





## Starting the New Year on the Trails

### New Year's Day 2023!

by Mike Pilvinsky

For many, January 1 is a time for recovery. These BMTA hikers chose another way to begin the new year. They visited the southern terminus of the Benton MacKaye Trail, enjoyed some great exercise and made new friends.

Laurel and Patrick Bowker from Benton, Tennessee, joined Tom and Carolyn Sewell, Tom Johnson, Raymond Laws and me on the BMT/AT Loop from Big Stamp Gap.

The hikers began their trek in a light, misty drizzle. Sadly, the views from Owen Vista and Springer Mountain were obscured by fog. The weather soon cleared and the group enjoyed perfect hiking weather for the rest of their trek.

After lunch in the Springer Shelter, we visited the iconic AT plaque and then began our return trip north on the AT before turning onto the BMT to return to our trailhead.



Tom Johnson, Raymond Laws, Patrick Bowker, Laurel Bowker and Carolyn Sewell. (Picture by Tom Sewell)



Hikers Joe Stagi and Karen Robertson at Bushy Head Gap. It was foggy obscuring winter views but a great day in the forest making for a good workout. Picture by Steve Dennison.



Jeffrey Bradley, Ralph Collinson and Ken Walker started their year on the Jackrabbit Trails. Picture by Kelly Motter.



## Loop From Thunder Rock

by Tom Sewell

Tom and Carolyn Sewell led seven hikers on a loop hike starting from the Thunder Rock Campground on the Ocoee River in Tennessee. A portion of this hike is along the BMT's Section 11e. They hiked 5.4 miles with an 820' elevation change. It's a great winter hike with lots of open views of the Big and Little Frog Wildernesses and the Ocoee River.



### You Can Help!

#### Help raise funds for BMTA's Land Acquisition Fund

If you have old BMTA T-Shirts you don't wear anymore, please consider donating them to be used for a BMTA Fundraising Quilt created from BMTA T-Shirts, bandanas, etc. Whether your shirts are from the Trail Store or are a Maintainer's T-Shirt, it would be a perfect addition for the quilt!



To donate your old T-Shirts, contact [Lydia Burns](#).

*The quilt will be an item in the 2023 Annual Meeting Raffle!*



# Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

Kelly Motter Hiking Director.

## Guidelines for Our Hikes

**COVID-19 Concerns** - If you believe you are in a high-risk group, please evaluate whether going on this hike is worth the potential risk.

### February



**February 11** (Saturday) GA Maintenance Trip. Sections 12a-b-c – US 64 >> FS 23. Contact Bob Cowdrick at [gamaintdirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:gamaintdirector@bmtamail.org).

**February 14** (Tuesday) Unicoi State Park to Helen and return. Easy to moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collison at [hikeleaderRC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderRC@bmtamail.org).

**February 17** (Friday) Talking Rock. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy to moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).

**February 22** (Wednesday) BMT: Watson Gap to Jack's River Trail intersection to Hemp Top to Dally Gap and return. Moderate 8 miles. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).



**February 25** (Saturday) TN/NC Maintenance Trip. Section 14a & b – FS 22B » Buck Bald Road. Contact Nelson Ashbrook at [tn-ncmaintdirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:tn-ncmaintdirector@bmtamail.org).

**February 27** (Monday) Wildcat Tract from Monument Road and Tobacco Pouch Trail. Moderate/difficult 9 miles. Two waterfalls and two cascades avoiding the wide and cold-water crossings. GA wildlife management area requires a GA DNR lands pass (available online). Fishing pass qualifies and discount for seniors. Contact Hiker Leader Steve Dennison at [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).

**February 28** (Tuesday) Quartz Loop to BMT to Thunder Rock Campground (Shuttle). Easy to moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collison at [hikeleaderRC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderRC@bmtamail.org).

### March

**March 6** (Monday) BMT Section 14a from TN 68 to Coker Creek Bridge. Moderate 8.2 miles. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).

**March 10** (Friday) BMT/AT: Upper two loops on Springer Mountain from Big Stamp Gap. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog)  
About 5 moderate miles. See all the sights: Springer Mountain, an AT shelter, the beginning of the BMT, the plaque honoring Benton MacKaye and Owen Vista!  
Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).





**March 11** (Saturday) GA Maintenance Trip. TBA  
Contact Bob Cowdrick at [gamaintdirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:gamaintdirector@bmtamail.org).

**March 13** (Monday) Miller Trek at Brasstown Valley Resort. Moderate to difficult 6.5 miles with elevation change of 1,400' and some rough footing.  
Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at [hikeleaderKM@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKM@bmtamail.org).

**March 19** (Sunday) Nottely Dam Trail. Easy to moderate 2.5 miles with excellent views of the lake.  
Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at [hikeleaderKM@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKM@bmtamail.org).

**March 23** (Thursday) Caney Creek, Ocoee, Tennessee. Hike to the extinct village of Caney Creek. See the remains of the only town in America that never had a horse or car in the village. The village was built by the East Tennessee Power Company and existed from 1912-1941. This village enjoyed concrete sidewalks, city water, telephones, streetlights and a lighted tennis court. The battery-powered town trolley took workers to and from work. Moderate /difficult 6.5 miles.  
Contact Hike Leader Clare Sullivan at [hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org).

**March 24** (Friday) Fightingtown Creek. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy to moderate 3.8 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org)



**March 25** (Saturday) TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA  
Contact Nelson Ashbrook at [tn-ncmaintdirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:tn-ncmaintdirector@bmtamail.org).

To access our website calendar, go [HERE](#).



## Quest for National Scenic Trail

### Our Continued Success Depends on YOU!

– If You Love the BMT and You Live in the United States –  
Please ask your Senators/Representative to support our quest.

Ask your friends and family to contact their  
Congressional representatives as well.

Use the links below to find your Senators/Representative.

[Senator](#)

[Representative](#)





# Save the Dates!

November 2 - 5, 2023

## BMTA Hike Fest and Annual Meeting

Tellico Plains, Tennessee

Hike to Bob Bald, Whigg Meadow, Unicoi Trail and more!

Watch for updates on [bmta.org](http://bmta.org) and in emails



### Great Smoky Mountains National Park

#### New Fees Go Into Effect March 1, 2023

Parking tags will be required to be displayed on any motor vehicle parked for more than 15 minutes within the park boundary. Use of park roads will remain toll free.

Daily Parking Tag	\$ 5.00
Tag for Up to Seven Days	\$ 15.00
Annual Parking Tag	\$ 40.00
Frontcountry Family Campsites (primitive)	\$ 30.00
Sites with Electrical Hook Ups	\$ 36.00

Before planning your backcountry trip, please read through this important information about reservations and permits, regulations, bear safety, trail closures, and more [Learn more](#).



“Wait. We have to walk to the site?”  
Photo by Mary Alton

The deadline for the March Newsletter is Wednesday, February 22.  
Thank you!