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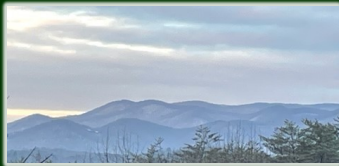
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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 40, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2023

Flat Creek Wildfire

Photos courtesy of Suzanne Zuckerman

The Aska Adventure area in Blue Ridge, Georgia, was the site of the Flat Creek Wildfire on November 9, 2022. Located between Aska Road and Grandeur Drive (west of Lake Blue Ridge) the fire grew to 50 acres and closed several trails, including Section 6 (Fall Branch Falls >> Weaver Creek) of the Benton MacKaye (BMT).

Seventy-five firefighters, including 60 from the United States Forest Service and the Georgia Forestry Commission, fought the blaze. Equipment used to bring the fire under control included five trucks, three bulldozers and two helicopters.

The BMT has re-opened, but the Stanley Gap Trail (165) remains closed east of the intersection with the Benton MacKaye Trail. Flat Creek Loop Trail (165B) and the Connector (165A) also are closed.

The continued closures are due to the Forest Service working to rehabilitate the charred landscape.





The Blue Ridge Ranger District's restoration efforts are based on the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program. The goal is to stabilize the area to protect public safety, to prevent additional degradation of the burned area and to minimize post-fire damage to cultural resources.

A wildfire's destruction of what usually is lush vegetation leaves the area subject to additional soil erosion. Increased water runoff from future storms may lead to flooding and debris flow, thereby further damaging the landscape. The BAER approach employs seeding, noxious weed prevention, mulching, the removal of hazards, the installation of water diversions as well as erecting barriers to protect sensitive areas from inquisitive visitors. The BAER program also employs additional measures to prevent the loss of habitat of threatened/endangered species.

The BAER methodology/goals include:

- ◆ Install water or erosion control devices.
- ◆ Add plants for erosion control or stability reasons.
- ◆ Establish erosion control measures at critical cultural sites.
- ◆ Erect temporary barriers to protect treated or recovering areas.
- ◆ Install warning signs.
- ◆ Replace minor safety-related facilities (if applicable).
- ◆ Install appropriate drainage features on roads and trails.
- ◆ Remove safety hazards.
- ◆ Prevent permanent loss of threatened and endangered habitat.
- ◆ Monitor the BAER procedures that were implemented.
- ◆ Set up early detection and rapid response treatments to minimize the spread of noxious weeds into native plant communities

Non-urgent/long-term recovery efforts for areas that may not recover naturally include the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by fire that are not critical to life/safety. Procedures that may be used are: restoration of burned habitat, reforestation, additional planting or seeding as needed, monitor the effects of the fire, replace burned fences, treat noxious weed infestations and install interpretive signs. Criteria/considerations for implementing these additional measures include:

- ◆ Nature of downstream values at risk
- ◆ Effectiveness of treatment
- ◆ Treatment combinations – land, channel, road/trail protection/safety, to reduce risks
- ◆ Timeframe for implementation
- ◆ Personnel and resources available for implementation and monitoring
- ◆ Hazards associated with treatment implementation
- ◆ Ease of treatment implementation
- ◆ Cost effectiveness of treatments
- ◆ Coordination with other federal, state, and local agencies

HOW YOU CAN HELP

When hiking in a burned-out area, heed all warning signs and respect all barriers. Put simply:

Stay on the trail!

<https://www.nifc.gov/programs/post-fire-recovery>

BMTA Old-Timer George Owen Invites You

Our own BMTA's George Owen will again be teaching a course this winter at the Institute for Continuing Learning (ICL) at Young Harris College. The course, open to all adults, is entitled "Florida Outdoors with Sunshine State Hiking and Winter Hiking in the Southern Appalachians." The course is every Monday, January 23 until March 13 from 10:00 AM until noon. Two-thirds of the course will be centered on the Florida outdoors and hiking there. The remaining time will focus on Appalachian winter trekking in Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

One-third of the state of Florida is now preserved as public land with thousands of miles of hiking trails. George will be emphasizing the outdoor opportunities in the state including the famous Florida National Scenic Trail which runs nearly the length of the state. He will intersperse information on the Florida trails with wildlife studies and stories from his own outdoor experiences in the Sunshine State. Several guest speakers will be helping with specific parts of the course in which each has special expertise.

George was born and grew up in central Florida, hunting and fishing there during his childhood and as a youth. In college he ran the nature lore classes for one of Florida's largest teenage summer camps.

He now returns each winter to his native state and spends much of his time outside exploring the trails.

To see the course information and to sign up at a very small cost, go to www.iclyhc.org or email icl@yhc.edu.



NEW in 2023 — BMTA's Blog!



Go deeper into all things BMT with regular blog posts starting this month.

Blog readers are encouraged to share their comments!

First post January 9, 2023

"Winter BMT Hiking"

[Check Out BMTA's Blog Now!](#)

No More Complaining...

by Bob Cowdrick

No more complaints are expected from Georgia Benton MacKaye Trail hikers. No more complaints about...

- ◆ Rebar sticking out of steps at the Suspension Bridge
- ◆ Water diversions full of leaves at Rhodes Mountain
- ◆ Payne Gap Spring hide and seek
- ◆ Downed trees on the trail at Sapling Gap
- ◆ Confusing sign at Deadennen Mountain
- ◆ Licklog crawl under trees
- ◆ Tipton Mountain climb overs
- ◆ The lost side trail to Payne Gap Spring

Why? Because, December 10, 25 Benton MacKaye Trail Association members resolved those problems with an incredible workday effort.

Steve Bayliss led the crew of Kelly Bayliss and Whitney June to cut out nine long-standing Licklog blow-downs. Steve Dennison and Bob Nelson were not far behind them cleaning out 58 water diversions on the trail to Rhodes Mountain. This crew had the longest hike in-and-out but got it done.

Joe Cantwell, with his chainsaw and swamper Kenny Martin, cut out two hiker-reported trees at Sapling Gap. Steve Pruett, Steve Hayden and Bob Cowdrick assessed future work trip water diversions. David Watkins made the 18 pieces of exposed rebar on the steps and in water diversions disappear.

Gilbert Treadwell teamed up with Smitty Smith, Chris Laucher, Ed Sullivan and Tom Atcheson to remove some trees on Tipton Mountain. These were forcing hikers to do some tricky maneuvers on the steep slope.

Andy Meeks worked with Ian Guttridge and Art Kolberg to install a new sign on Deadennen Mountain while surveying for a new sign at Lula Head Gap. On their way back out to Wilscot Gap they cleared out a few nuisance blowdowns.

A hiker reported only two trees down at Skeenah Gap but Patrick Ward ended up cutting out 10 blowdowns.

Cindy Ward measured the Skeenah Gap sign for replacement.

Heather Godfrey lopped the trail to Payne Gap.

Shane Morrison, with the help of Blake Godfrey, installed new pipe at the Payne Gap Spring, while Darcy Douglas blazed the trail to the spring.





Let the numbers speak for themselves:

- ◆ 191 Volunteer hours
- ◆ 82 Volunteer miles hiked
- ◆ 25 Members and guests participated
- ◆ 28 Blowdowns removed
- ◆ 18 Rebar obstacles remedied
- ◆ 8 Blue Spring Blazes painted
- ◆ 5 Feet of PVC spring pipe installed
- ◆ 3 Future signs surveyed
- ◆ 2 First-time attendees
- ◆ 1 New sign installed
- ◆ 0 Injuries



This was an outstanding effort on what proved to be a sunny December day. Please consider joining us on our next work trip on Saturday, January 14, 2023.

Report What You See!

Whenever a hiker sets out on a trek on the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), they can provide a valuable service by becoming the “eyes and ears” of the association. Our Section Maintainers inspect the trail on a regular basis, but some of the most important/timely information comes from reports provided by hikers and trail workers who happened to pass by soon after a new issue arose. Such issues include:

- ◆ Blowdowns
- ◆ Rootballs that took a portion of trail out
- ◆ Heavy brush
- ◆ Tread damage
- ◆ Slippery rocks
- ◆ Trail in need of sidehilling
- ◆ Damaged or washed-out bridge
- ◆ Poisonous plants
(poison ivy if a significant amount is present)
- ◆ Damaged or missing signs
- ◆ Faded blazes
- ◆ A portion of trail that needs a blaze to be added
- ◆ Access road washed out or is blocked by a blowdown
- ◆ Damage at the trailhead
- ◆ Unusual structure adjacent to the trail
- ◆ Damage to cribbing
- ◆ Trash



Blowdowns

All the above eventually would be caught by our dedicated maintainers but hikers can give us a great head start for prioritizing the work to be done.



Before and after.

Being BMTA's eyes and ears is not limited to reports of damage to the trail and landscape.

Only 15 miles of the BMT remain on public roads or private lands. Property adjacent to or that is located near to the BMT could be a valuable addition to the trail's corridor and BMTA needs to be ready to act when one of these parcels comes on the market.

Ninety-five percent of the BMT is on public lands. Unfortunately, this doesn't mean the "viewscape" from the trail is protected. In the event a parcel of land is in close proximity to the trail's route within Forest Service land comes on the market and/or is sold, the great views from the trail and/or the peaceful ambience of the forest pathway could be imperiled. Consequently, hikers also need to be on the lookout for:

- ◆ For sale signs on property adjacent to or near the trail's corridor
- ◆ Permit signage on property adjacent to or near to the trail's corridor
- ◆ New survey markers/flags
- ◆ Newspaper notices concerning rezoning a property adjacent to or within view of the trail
- ◆ Or you may encounter someone who relays information to you on any of the above.



Remember, YOU are BMTA's eyes and ears on the trail.

Please report what you see, hear or read to

contactBMTA@bmtaemail.org.



**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!

Not “Singing in the Rain”

by Mike Pilvinsky

This was not the wettest hike I’ve ever been on, but it was among the top 10. This was a time the weather gurus got it all wrong. When rain was not predicted...it rained. When rain was predicted it rained. But that did not deter us.

From our base camp at South Carolina’s Oconee State Park, Benton MacKaye Trail Association President, Ken Cissna, Gilbert Treadwell and I located the Bad Creek Trailhead on Duke Power Company property. Our first task was to avoid 20+ hikers from the Greenville Natural History Club who were assembling and ready to hike. In less than a mile they caught up to us, so we decided to take a little known (to us) side trail named the Coon Branch Trail. It was a lovely mile-long trail along the Whitewater River into an old-growth forest populated by giant hemlocks, tulip magnolias and pines.

We doubled back and set off to find the Lower Whitewater Falls Overlook without a traffic jam. After crossing the Foothills Trail, we continued to finish our original route. The hike was more challenging than I remembered and was complicated by the slippery, wet, leaves covering the footpath. We arrived at the overlook to find a 270-degree view of fog. Oh well, as they say, a bad day of hiking is better than a good day at work.

That night we returned to our cabin and campsite at Oconee State Park to enjoy hot showers and a warm fire. The following day we walked the first two sections of the Foothills Trail and returned home on Friday.

Oconee State Park is well worth the visit in better weather. It is the southern terminus of the seventy-nine-mile Foothills Trail and offers many recreational opportunities for the whole family. It is located less than an hour’s drive from Clayton, Georgia.



Ken Cissna ponders Whitewater Creek and four more miles in the rain and fog.



Gilbert Treadwell resting in the rain at Lower Whitewater Falls Overlook after a rainy, foggy slog.

BMTA Tennessee Maintenance Trip Section 12e Lost Creek Campground to Reliance

by Steve Cartwright with photos courtesy of Patty Masters and Rick Harris

Nine volunteers participated in this maintenance trip. The primary tasks accomplished:

- ◆ Brushed out sections of the trail corridor.
- ◆ Removed/cleaned up 14 downed trees.
- ◆ Cleared nine water diversions.
- ◆ Cleaned out the fire ring in the primitive campsite along the trail.
- ◆ Twenty-six blazes were either painted or refreshed.

A special thanks to Keith Mertz for his blazing job and for remedying a problem for northbound hikers on FSR 103 - a double blaze to indicate where the trail departs the road to go downslope to keep company with Big Lost Creek.

The day started cloudy and very cold, but the sun came out in the afternoon making the temperature somewhat bearable. Finally, participants who were able to stay until the conclusion of the trip were treated to a delicious meal at Lost Creek Campground by Chef Patty Masters (as the owner of Lost Creek Cabins she did not have far to travel). We were served hot chocolate, antipasto, a hearty soup, garlic bread and delectable homemade candies. She also brought firewood and we were able to have a nice campfire while we enjoyed our meal. There is no question - Chef Patty goes above and beyond in providing her special trail magic!



On a Personal Note

by Clayton Webster

I have told many of you that my daddy knew Benton MacKaye, founder of the Appalachian Trail and the person for whom the Benton MacKaye Trail is named. My daddy made 514 pictures of the Smoky Mountains and surrounding area before it was a National Park and before there was a National Forest. My brothers and I donated these pictures to the University of Tennessee Smokies project managed by Ken Wise, author of many respected hiking books about the Smokies.



Here is a picture my daddy made of Benton MacKaye.

Also in the picture is Harvey Broome, founder of the Wilderness Society. Benton is lying down and has glasses on. Harvey Broome is right behind him.

Gail Edmondson and Guy Frizzell were hiking buddies of my daddy. Guy Frizzell, Carlos Campbell, and Dutch Roth were the first people to hike the entire length of the Smokies. They did it with a measuring wheel to record the distance.

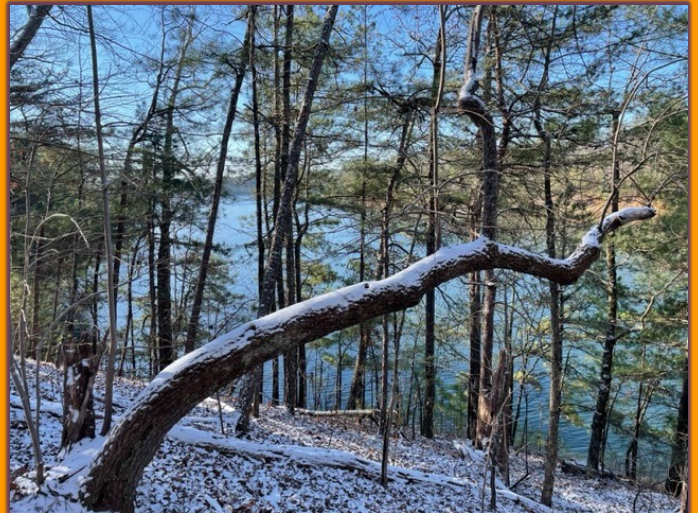
I think Paul Fink was at this meeting. He was awarded the title of the "Guiding influence to complete the Appalachian Trail in Tennessee and North Carolina." He is in the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame. I have a letter from him with a wooden mallet made from the tree that Daniel Boone inscribed on it: "D. Boone cilled a bar in 1760." Paul Fink certified the mallet is authentic. The tree was thought to be 350 years old when it came down in a storm in 1924.

Harvey Broome lived on Mountain Crest near my home when I was growing up. He wrote a book called *Out Under the Sky of the Great Smokies*. It is his personal journal of hiking in the Smokies before it was a National Park. Many of the hikes my daddy was on and are referenced in the book. Daddy has many handwritten notes and has underlined parts of the book.

Dutch Roth took over 10,000 pictures of the Smokies before it was a National Park. My daddy was on many of the hikes when Dutch took the pictures and is in lots of them. When Dutch died, his daughter Margaret got the pictures. She lived in Emmerts Cove near Pittman Center. Every summer our family vacationed near her home. Daddy would take me up to Margaret's house to look through these priceless pictures. When Margaret died, Dutch's grandson Charlie got the pictures. He lives in New Market, Tennessee, where my brother also lives. I have been fortunate enough to go to see the pictures Charlie has displayed in his basement in scrap-books and files.

What a treasure!

Amadahy Snow Dust



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.

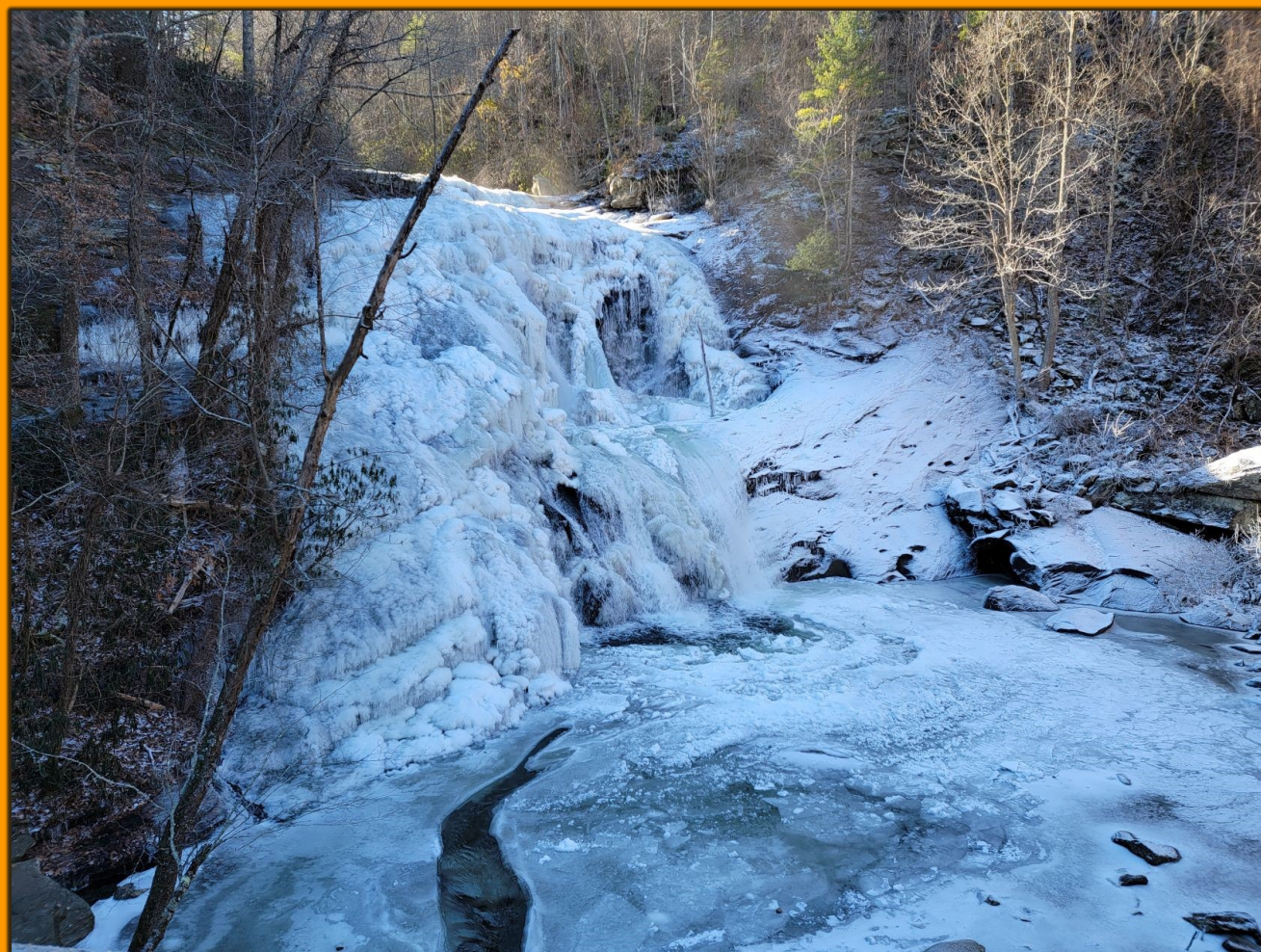
Ask your friends and family to contact their
Congressional representatives as well.

Use the links below to find your Senators/Representative.

[Senator](#)

[Representative](#)

Nature's Art Gallery



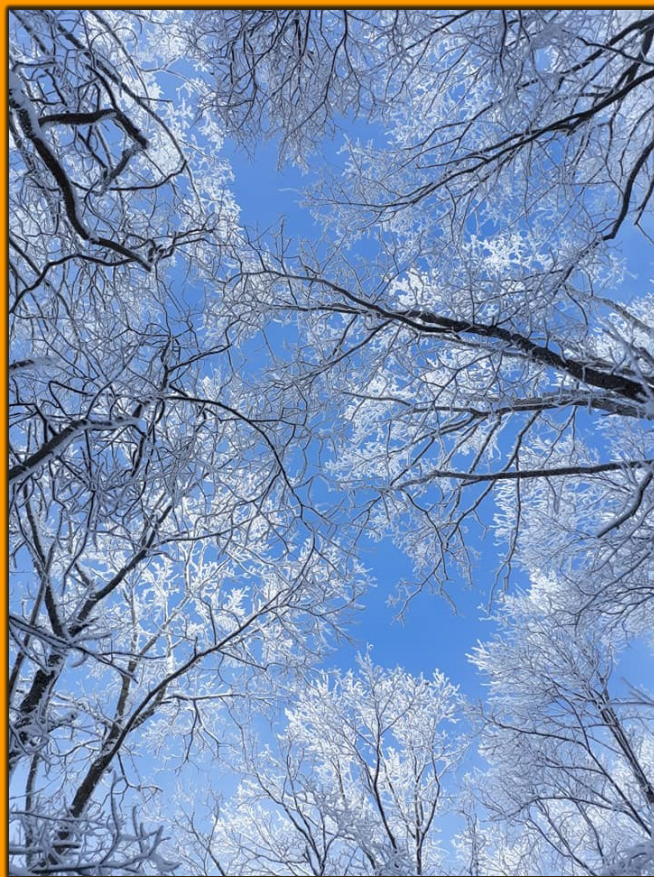
Bald River Falls
Courtesy of Rick Harris



Baby Falls
Courtesy of Rick Harris



Holder Falls
Courtesy of Rick Harris



Big Frog
Courtesy of Karen Attaway



Snow Trail
Courtesy of Dan Sims

Where's My face?!

by Kathy Williams photos courtesy of Liberty Murray



So, the day after the Polar Vortex my daughter and I decided to hike my section of the BMT (Section7a). It was close to 10 degrees by the time we put on our merino wool and headed out.

“Hey, I don’t have my face!!!”

“Yes you do Mom. I will take a picture to show that your face is still on.”

“Oh. Ok, yes, it is still there. Thanks. I feel better now.”



Hmm. I guess our polar plunge will have to wait.

Welcome 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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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.

January

January 11 (Wednesday) BMT: Bushy Head Gap to McKenny and return. Moderately/strenuous 8 miles. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

January 13 (Monday) Jack Rabbit Trails in North Carolina. Moderate 4 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at hikeleaderRC@bmtamail.org.



January 14 (Saturday) GA Maintenance Trip. Suspension Bridge (Section 2c) and Rhodes Mountain (Section 3c). Contact Bob Cowdrick at gamaintdirector@bmtamail.org.

January 16 (Monday) Thunder Rock Express to Chestnut Mountain Trail to BMT down to Thunder Rock Campground. Moderate 6.5 miles. Whitewater Center in Ducktown, Tennessee. Contact Hike Leaders Tom and Carolyn Sewell at hikeleaderTS@bmtamail.org.

January 20 (Friday) BMT from Three Forks to No Name Gap and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4.7 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

January 24 (Tuesday) BMT Dyer Gap to Shadow Falls to Pinhoti Trail intersection. Return to Dyer Gap then southbound to Flat Top Mountain. Moderately/ strenuous 7 miles. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.



January 28 (Saturday) TN/NC Maintenance Trip. Section 13b Childers Creek >> Big Bend. Contact Nelson Ashbrook at nelsonashbrook@gmail.com.

January 30 (Monday) Coker Creek Falls in TN to the BMT and return. Hike is located north of Ducktown, off Hwy 68. Moderate 4.7 miles. There are a series of cascading waterfalls and tons of photo opportunities. Gold was found in this area prior to the 49ers going west. Contact Hike Leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan at hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org.

February

February 1 (Wednesday) Amadahy Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy to moderate 5 miles along the shore of Carter's Lake. Lunch at the marine campground. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at hikeleaderRC@bmtamail.org.

February 10 (Friday) 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.



February 11 (Saturday) GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact Bob Cowdrick at 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.

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.

February 20 (Monday) BMT Section 14a from TN 68 to Coker Creek Bridge. Moderate 8.2 miles. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at hikeleaderSD@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.



February 25 (Saturday) TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact Nelson Ashbrook at 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.

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.

March

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.



March 11 (Saturday) GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact Bob Cowdrick at gamaintdirector@bmtamail.org.

March 17 (Friday) Nottely Dam Trail. Easy to moderate 2.5 miles with excellent views of the lake. Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at hikeleaderKM@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

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



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 and in emails



The deadline for the February Newsletter is Wednesday, February 1.
Thank you!