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Points of Interest

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Relationships

Edwin Dale

Fightingtown Creek

Hiking Class

Two-State Maintenance

Join!

Presentations

Lake Nottely

Upcoming



BMTA Officers 2023-2024

President: Bob Cowdrick
Vice President: Clare Sullivan
Secretary: Jessie Hayden
Treasurer: Lydia Burns
GA M/D: Joe Cantwell
TN/NC M/D: Nelson Ashbrook
Smokies Coord: David Watkins
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Store: Sue Ricker
Newsletter: Kathy Williams
State Rep GA: Darcy Douglas
State Rep TN/NC: James Anderson



BMTA Headquarters



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Relationships, Progress and Feedback

by Bob Cowdrick

BMTA members,

I value relationships and feedback. These are two avenues of connection I hold in the highest regard. As your President, I have made significant progress by cultivating relationships with the local USFS Trail Techs and personnel across the forests which the BMT crosses.

I introduce myself, give them a summary of what we have been doing this past year and the impact we have made by sharing our BMTA Impact Report. Topics that we discuss include:

- ◆ Partnerships
- ◆ Policy Changes
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Grants
- ◆ Stewardship
- ◆ Accessibility
- ◆ Projects



2023 Impact Report

288 Miles of Trail Maintained

In GA, TN and NC



Major Projects

Rhodes Mt Re-Route
 Big Stamp Gap Parking Kiosk
 Sisson Shelter Renovations
 Clean Trails Day
 24 New/Replacement Signs



8 Festivals

3 Trail Towns

Financials

Revenue: \$103,200
 Expenses: \$49,700



897 Members

201 Maintainers

67% Male and 33% Female



8048 Volunteer Hours

Totaling \$255,926 in Stewardship Value



Members Trained

6 Crosscut Certifications
 11 Chainsaw Certifications
 15 First Aid and CPR



Great Smoky Mt Nat Park

8 Campsite Cleanups
 192 Volunteer Hours



I also solicit feedback from them on what the BMTA can do better. By creating channels for open communication and feedback, we can be a better organization and partner of the USFS.

Likewise, I value the relationships I have with you as members of the BMTA. Granted, I have yet to meet, hike or work with many of you, but I want to encourage you to share your ideas with me and the other board members on how to make the BMTA better. Feedback offers invaluable insights into our blind spots, strengths and areas ripe for improvement.

So, take a moment and think of one idea or suggestion you believe would be valuable to the BMTA. Drop me a note (P.O. Box 6, Cherry Log, GA 30522) or email (bmtapresident@bmta.org). I am always open to the suggestions you may have.



Wilderness Skills Institute

May 20-24 and May 28-31

Transylvania County, NC on the Pisgah National Forest at the Cradle of Forestry

This is one of the best training opportunities available. You can attend one or both weeks. Each class is multiple days, so you can only take one class per week.

- ◆ Crosscut Saw A/B
- ◆ Wilderness First Aid and CPR
- ◆ Wilderness Ranger and Trail Technician Workshop
- ◆ Advanced Trail Techniques: Stonework
- ◆ Introduction to Horse Packing
- ◆ Wilderness Management Fundamentals
- ◆ Trail Layout & Design
- ◆ Land Navigation and Orienteering
- ◆ Southern Appalachian Ecosystems

Apply online at <https://wildernessskillsinstitute.org/sawsi/wsi-application-hidden/>. This is open to all club members, and there is no cost to attend. Free camping is available on-site. (RV and hotel accommodations are available, at modest cost.)

Edwin Dale and the Early Years of Trail Building

by Marty Dominy

Randy Snodgrass was the first president of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA), formed in 1980. Randy worked for the Wilderness Society out of their Atlanta office and was largely responsible for handling the details, paperwork and decisions required to form this new organization. In the April 1981 *BMTA Newsletter*, it was announced that Randy would be taking a fellowship at Yale later in the summer. Edwin Dale succeeded Randy as president of the BMTA. Edwin had the unenviable task of holding together a fledgling organization, recruiting volunteers, generating publicity for the trail and continually reassuring the Forest Service that the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) was a viable project.

Describing Edwin's personality is not an easy thing to do. To many people who met him for the first time or didn't know him well, he seemed a bit aloof, deep in thought, or simply detached from all that was going on around him. However, he actually was quite outgoing, particularly when it came to promoting the BMT and recruiting volunteers to do the work the trail required. Edwin was well educated, having a PhD and working at Emory University. Despite this, he once lamented that his wife, Barbara, didn't think he was very smart. He would go on to say she moderated her stance on this after watching him correctly answer all the questions during a viewing of an episode of "Jeopardy".

Edwin relentlessly recruited volunteers from wherever he could find them. He regularly invited members of the Sierra Club, the Boy Scouts and various church groups to the monthly work trips. Somewhere between Springer Mountain and Three Forks, he encountered a group that included Darcy Douglas. He invited them to join the BMTA and come to work on the trail. The rest is history. In 1985, a young man who had recently relocated to the Atlanta area wrote letters to the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC) and the BMTA expressing a desire to become involved with trail work. He never did hear from GATC, but Edwin put him on the newsletter list in short order. That young man would go on to join the BMTA and is a section maintainer to this day.



Angela Carpenter, Troy Carpenter, George Owen, Tom Reilly, mystery worker, Darcy Douglas and Edwin Dale west of Three Forks.

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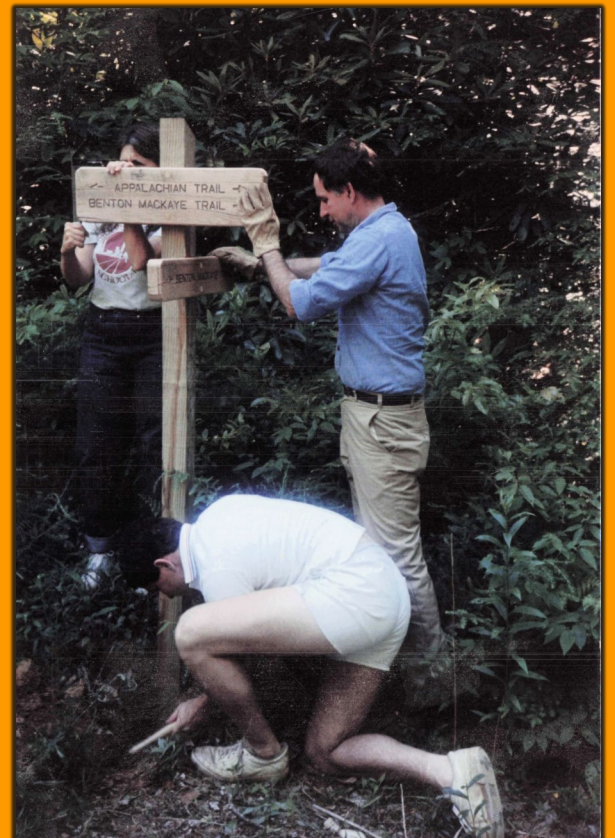
If someone had a special skill that the BMTA needed, Edwin would make a point of making a friend of them. Administrative specialists, publicists, blaze painters and sign makers were just a few of the disciplines that would make you his best buddy. His old Ford pickup truck was frequently the ride of choice for putting up trail signs, hauling tools and transporting volunteers. That old truck made more than a few white-knuckle rides up and down Flat Top Mountain. In the days before the crippling concern over liability, the tailgate of the truck served as a bar when Edwin would break out the beer cooler after a work trip. Good times!

Perhaps the greatest crisis during Edwin's tenure was the Decision Notice of April 15, 1983, from the Regional Forester. The project to build the BMT had been ongoing for nearly three years – on a schedule that originally was projected to be two years to completion. Despite many meetings and discussions of route alternatives into Tennessee and North Carolina over the course of 1982, the Decision Notice decreed that the BMT would not leave Georgia. Edwin was concerned that the trail would not even make it into the Cohutta Wilderness as the Forest Service was opposed to the trail entering any Congressionally designated wilderness. Whether he did it as a sincere capitulation to the Forest Service or as a means of motivating the membership of the BMTA may never be known, but Edwin suggested stopping the trail at Watson Gap short of the Cohutta Wilderness. George Owen would say that this brought about an intense and vociferous reaction from the founding members and many others who already had invested a significant part of their lives in the project. The trail construction would continue toward the Cohutta Wilderness and every opportunity would be used to have the Decision Notice reversed.

The social aspect of trail building was not lost on Edwin. He often invited people to stay over at the cabin he and Barbara owned on a wooded knoll between Aska Road and Lake Blue Ridge. He understood that the vast majority of the volunteers appreciated the fellowship that came with trail building and encouraged them to break bread together at such local establishments as the Pink Pig in Cherry Log. Edwin's tenure as president of the organization concluded at the end of 1985 when George Owen was elected president for the 1986 term. Edwin would continue as an active member of the association and served on the board of directors through 1990, including two terms as vice-president.

Upon his retirement from Emory, Edwin and Barbara moved into a new house near their cabin on Lake Blue Ridge. Edwin worked for the Forest Service in Blue Ridge for a number of years back when there was something known as the Toccoa Ranger District. It was a bit odd at first to sit on the opposite side of the table from Edwin at meetings with the Forest Service. He could be the devil's advocate as well as anyone, so when engaging in debate with him, facts and conviction were essential. The production of the mounds of paperwork required by the Forest Service was tedious to most people. Edwin would approach this as just another task in which patience and perseverance made the work simple.

Shortly after retiring completely, Edwin and Barbara moved to Athens, Georgia. Edwin would attend work trips on occasion and make appearances at annual meetings that had some anniversary associated with it. Barbara passed away July 14, 2012. Edwin died May 22, 2015.



Edwin Dale steadying a new sign west of Three Forks.

Fightingtown Creek

by Clayton Webster

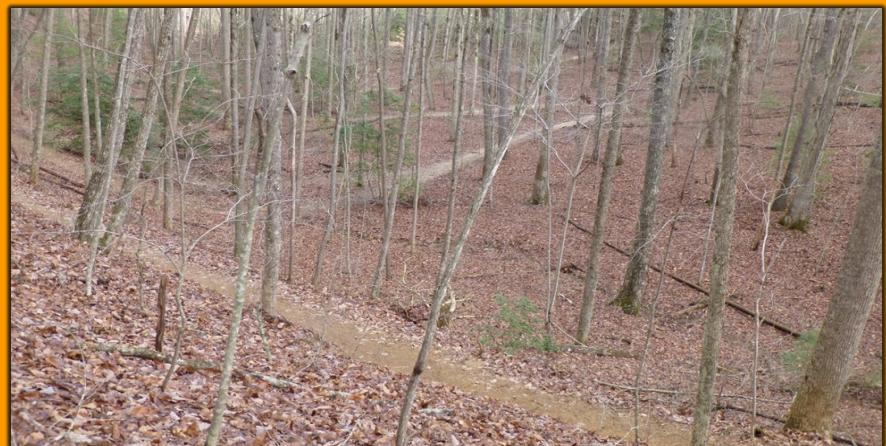
On January 29, 2024, 12 Benton MacKaye Trail Association members hiked a 3.6-mile loop trail within the 12-mile Fightingtown Creek Nature Park near Blue Ridge. BMTA Past President, Ken Cissna was our hike leader. Fightingtown Creek is a very new park and trail system, having only been open since mid-September 2022. This trail system is built as a mountain bike trail system with banked curves and numerous switchbacks when there is significant elevation change. However, it is open to hikers as well. There were a number of signs specifying which direction and on which day that bikes are to go and hikers are to go. This system ensures that both groups will approach the other face to face rather than a bike overtaking a hiker from behind.



Mike Pilvinsky got a good shot of the other 11 hikers and two trail dogs at the trailhead. Signage and trail maps were plentiful during our hike. Everybody was pretty bundled up. Normally during a hike, we will shed a layer or two, but most everyone stayed like this for the entire hike. Even when the sun broke through, it remained pretty cold.

The 190-acre Fightingtown Creek Nature Park is owned by the Southeast Trust for Parks and Land. In addition, they operate the Talking Rock Nature Park which is also a dual hiking/mountain biking trail system.

Southeast Trust operates the park as a partnership with several mountain bike organizations, plus trail builder Ken Nix.



Switchbacks and extra clean trails contribute to safe biking in the Park.

Continued next page

You could see a long way along the trail since there was hardly any undergrowth. This is just how it appeared to occur naturally and no clearing had been done. There were a lot of young white pines so they will become the dominant tree before too long. Right now, it is a nice hardwood forest. We hiked across a few small streams and saw one, very strong, running spring. There were a lot of Christmas ferns, partridge berries, pip-sissewa, rattlesnake plantain, a couple of crane fly orchids and galax. But the most dominant plant we saw all day was mountain laurel. If they all bloom this will be a great hike around mid-May.



Here is something that we do not see very often. It is called an Earth Star. We saw these in several locations. Many of our hikers had never seen them before. It is a type of fungi.



Navigating one of the switchbacks. We did not see any other hikers or bikers even though it was a great day to be on the trail!

Hiking the Southern Appalachians Adult Education Class Starts April 1

George Owen, Instructor

He's at it again! Our own BMTA co-founder and former president George Owen will teach a multi-week class on hiking and the outdoors in the Southern Appalachians. The two-hour classes are on Mondays beginning April 1 and lasting into early May. This class is for both newcomers to our area as well as for broadening the outdoor knowledge and opportunities of folks who have a few months or years hiking. The class is conveniently located to serve those in northern Georgia, southwest North Carolina and southeast Tennessee. The class is part of the adult courses offered by the Institute for Continuing Learning (ICL) on the Young Harris College Campus.

With over 50 years of experience leading hikes and developing trails in our area, George offers many handouts, free trail maps and information on comfort and safety in the outdoors. There will be guest presenters with special Appalachian outdoor offerings. Concerns about certain animals, equipment, outdoor groups in our area and much else will be covered in this annual class.



George Owen at Owen Vista on Springer Mountain. Yes, it is named for him!

Besides the BMTA, instructor George has held various leadership positions in other trail organizations. He has laid out and supervised construction of over 125 miles of new and relocated trails on the Chattahoochee National Forest, including several Appalachian Trail side trails. After career retirement, he spent 10 summers as a trail guide in Switzerland. He is currently serving his fourth term as president of the Mountain High Hikers.

To sign up for this course go to www.iclyhc.org - the cost is \$30 for a yearly membership in ICL and then \$25 for George's course, which will be posted online by early March. Registration opens March 4.

For further information or to answer any questions you may contact George at his home phone (706) 374-4716.

George brings snacks and drinks to class and offers local easy hikes after the classes for those wishing to enhance the classroom experience with some outside activity.

Two-State Combined Maintenance

by Joe Cantwell with photos courtesy of Joe Cantwell, Judy Price and Daphne Martin

The BMTA two-state combined maintenance trip on February 10, was a resounding success. Thirteen volunteers concentrated on Section 2 from Three Forks to Highway 60.

Barry Allen, Patrick Ward, Shane Morrison, Bryon Coker and Darcy Douglas cleared from the Suspension Bridge to Bryson Gap. This included the removal of two root balls that had taken out the tread.

Steve Hayden and Mike Pilvinsky logged out from the Suspension Bridge to Highway 60.

Bob Cowdrick led the crew of Steve Dennison, Eric Medina, Andy Meeks and Will Kirchoffer between The Bald and Bryson Gap. They removed blowdowns, did weed eating and cleaned out water diversions. Joe Cantwell met the crew at Three Forks, shuttled them to the Bald and then drove to near Bryson Gap as a hiking mileage saver.

The final totals for the Georgia contingent include:

- ◆ 29 trees logged
- ◆ 6.4 miles brushed
- ◆ 10 water diversions cleaned
- ◆ 124.5 volunteer hours



Eight BMTA members met at Thunder Rock Campground to log out recently reported blowdowns on Sections 12b,c,e. Clare Sullivan and Nelson Ashbrook helped coordinate the crews consisting of Steve Bayliss, Bob Nelson, Judy Price, Ken Andrews and Daphne and Kenny Martin.



The work sites included complex overhead and spring pole scenarios, along with Kenny's 30-inch jumbo winning the prize for size!

Continued next page



Oh, what a tangled web of trees!



Swamper Bob Nelson with sawyer Steve Bayliss.



Swampers Judy Norton and Daphne Martin with sawyer Kenny Martin.



BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Join or Renew Now!

"...leave a footpath for generations to follow"



Tiny Sasquatch says, "Don't forget!"

Presentations for Tennessee Hiking Clubs Highlight the BMT

by Clare Sullivan

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) has a great contingency of speakers who specialize in putting the spotlight on the Benton MacKaye Trail at meetings and other gatherings. The outreach is part of BMTA's efforts to educate the public and to recruit new members and trail workers. Speaking engagements for February included:



February 8, 2024—Cherokee Hiking Club

Clare's presentation at the Cherokee Hiking Club meeting captivated the members of the group as she described what sets the BMT apart from other trails—the unique peaceful solitude of the meandering forest pathways as hikers pass by scenic vistas, gushing waterfalls, bubbling creeks and across several unique bridges.



February 21, 2024—Chattanooga Hiking Club

Next on the docket was a presentation at the Len Foote Hike Inn for the Chattanooga Hiking Club. Clare's descriptions of hiking through Wilderness Areas, the need for trail maintenance and the BMTA's quest for National Scenic trail designation were of special interest to the 34 members in attendance. Representing the BMTA were Clare and Ed Sullivan and Kathy Anderson. Pictured ... Several members of CHC enjoying the Sunshine Room after the event.

If you know of other organizations that might enjoy a presentation on the BMT, please contact Clare Sullivan at bmtamedia@bmta.org.

Lake Nottely Reservoir Lakeshore Trail



BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Support the Trail You Love - Donate Now!

"...leave a footpath for generations to follow"

Upcoming Hikes and Maintenance Trips

by 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.

March

March 4 (Monday) Hike the Rock Creek Trail in Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee. Begin at Hwy 64 at Thunder Rock Trail Parking and hike across the Ocoee and up the BMT 2.2 miles to the Rock Creek Trail. Hike 5.6 miles on the Rock Creek Trail. Total mileage will be 7.8. The climbs and descents are moderate. The rating for the entire hike is strenuous. There are a few minor creek crossings, one could be fairly deep. We will shuttle from the other end of the Rock Creek Trail on Hwy 64, a very easy shuttle. Contact Hike Leaders Clare Sullivan and Judy Price at bmtahikeleadercs2@bmta.org.

March 5 (Tuesday) Brush Creek Loop. Moderate/easy 7 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at bmtahikeleaderrc@bmta.org.

March 8 (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 bmtahikeleaderkc@bmta.org.



March 9 (Saturday) BMTA Monthly Maintenance Trip. GA Team Section 3. Hwy 60 >> Skeenah Gap. TN Team Section 14a - FS 22B » Unicoi Mt Trail (TN Hwy 68) Contact Joe Cantwell at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org. Contact Nelson Ashbrook at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

March 10 (Sunday) Byron Reece to Blood Mountain and return. Moderate/strenuous 4 + miles round-trip up to the top of Blood Mountain for absolutely beautiful views. We'll take this hike slow and easy so that all can enjoy it. Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at bmtahikeleaderkm@bmta.org.

March 12 (Tuesday) Tour of Project Chimps along with a Lunch Launch! We will be using their extra-large mounted sling shots to shoot their cabbage, peppers, lettuce etc., into the air into their habitat area. Following the Chimps lunch (and ours), we will hike the 3-mile trail at Project Chimps. A \$25.00 donation to Project Chimps (cash/check) minimum. Contact Hike Leaders Clare Sullivan and Kathy Williams at bmtahikeleadercs2@bmta.org.

March 17 (Sunday) Special Event! BMTA and GATC (Georgia Appalachian Trail Club) will join together for a group hike. This hike starts at Wilscot Gap (GA Hwy 60) and proceeds southbound to Payne Gap and then on to Skeenah Gap on Skeenah Gap Road. This moderately/strenuous hike is about 5.3 miles long, has about 1,300 vertical feet of ascents and requires a short shuttle. Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at bmtahikeleaderkm@bmta.org.

March 18 (Monday) Hike to the remains of Caney Creek Village, Tennessee, in the Cherokee National Forest. Begin at 1,604 feet elevation and hike down to 840 feet elevation to see the remains of Caney Creek Village, then hike back up. This village existed from 1912-1941. It had electricity, indoor plumbing, mass transit, a lighted tennis court and a hotel. It's known as the only community in America that never had a vehicle or horse in the community. The remains are visible because the concrete foundations were made of the same grade of concrete as the dams on the Ocoee. Members of the community built the flume along the Ocoee. Moderate 6 miles. Contact Hike Leaders Clare Sullivan and Ed Sullivan at bmtahikeleadercs2@bmta.org.

March 22 (Friday). Fightingtown Creek #2. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 3.8 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at bmtahikeleaderkc@bmta.org.

March 30 The Georgia Death Race from Vogel to Amicalola Falls. Racers will be on some BMTA Trails.

April

April 3 (Wednesday) Trails of Jack Rabbit. TR 750, 756, 757 and 754. This creates a loop. The hike is moderate and approximately 5 miles.

Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at bmtahikeleaderrc@bmta.org.

April 5 (Tuesday) Quartz Loop and BMT to Thunder Rock. Easy/moderate 5 plus miles.

Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at bmtahikeleaderrc@bmta.org.

April 7 (Sunday) Upper Springer Mountain Loop. This is a 5-mile moderate hike which will stop at both the BMT and the AT Southern termini. Beautiful views.

Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at bmtahikeleaderkm@bmta.org.

April 10 (Wednesday) Tobacco Pouch Trail to Buice Falls to Fall Creek Falls and return on Fall Creek Trail. Moderate/strenuous approximately 8 miles with views of the cascades. GA WMA license required.

Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at bmtahikeleadersd@bmta.org.

April 12 (Friday) Flat Creek Loop. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5.6-mile loop hike featuring Flat Creek.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at bmtahikeleaderkc@bmta.org.



April 13 (Saturday) BMTA Monthly Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact Joe Cantwell at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

Contact Nelson Ashbrook at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

April 14 (Sunday) BMT Hwy 60 to Suspension Bridge and return. Moderate/strenuous. Approximately 8 miles long with 1800 ft elevation gain.

Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at bmtahikeleaderkm@bmta.org.

April 17 (Wednesday) Brasstown Bald in and out 4-mile moderate hike on the Wagon Train Trail.

Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at bmtahikeleaderrc@bmta.org.

April 19 (Friday) BMT - Hudson Gap, out and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4-5 miles Come out to see spring wildflowers.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at bmtahikeleaderkc@bmta.org.

May

May 1 (Wednesday) Lady Slippers! Mulky Gap near Blairsville. Easy/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 where there are flame azaleas as well as some super-sized pink lady slippers. Contact Hike Leaders Joy and Frank Forehand at bmtahikeleaderjf@bmta.org.

May 3 (Friday) BMT: From Thunder Rock Campground, up Thunder Rock Express Trail, across Chestnut Mountain Trail and down the BMT. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5.2-mile loop. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at bmtahikeleaderkc@bmta.org.

May 8 (Wednesday) Lady Slipper Hike. BMT at Weaver Creek in Blue Ridge. Moderate/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 lunch at the water cutoff beside some of the largest lady slippers on the section. As we stroll back to the trailhead, we'll pass numerous gardens of the pink beauties. Contact Hike Leaders Joy and Frank Forehand at bmtahikeleaderjf@bmta.org.



May 11 (Saturday) BMTA Monthly Maintenance Trip. TBA
Contact Joe Cantwell at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.
Contact Nelson Ashbrook at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

May 17 (Friday) Amadahy Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 5 miles along the shore of Carter's Lake. Lunch at the marine campground. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at bmtahikeleaderkc@bmta.org.

May 21 (Tuesday) Turtletown Creek Falls Moderate 5 miles. Turtletown Creek plus two of the most beautiful falls you'll ever see on a short hike. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at bmtahikeleaderrc@bmta.org.

May 29 (Wednesday) Pickens Nose overlook on the AT. Enjoy this beautiful view on a moderate, short trail (under 3 miles). Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at bmtahikeleaderrc@bmta.org.

May 31 (Friday) Wilscot Gap to Brawley Tower, Payne Gap and return. Moderate/strenuous 12.6 miles. Option for a shorter version Wilscot Gap to Brawley Tower and return 6.2 miles round trip. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at bmtahikeleadersd@bmta.org.

May 31 (Friday) Fightingtown Creek Nature Park. The Creekside Trail. Easy/moderate 3.5 miles. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at bmtahikeleaderkc@bmta.org.

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

**The deadline for the April Newsletter is
Wednesday, April 3. Thank you!**

