

New trail under construction; begins atop Springer Mountain

Hiking, backpacking, hunting, camping, bird watching, photography, wild flower viewing, rock bounding, walking, or just sittin' and watchin' the world go by can all be done in a new recreation trail being built in Fannin County! This trail, (BMT), named after Benton MacKaye, the forester whose foresight and vision led to the development of the Appalachian Trail (AT) in 1937, begins, like the AT, atop Springer Mountain in the southern corner of the county, passes through Forest Service land, and now ends on County Road 157 and Ga. Hwy. 5 (U.S.

76) at the Cherry Log Church.

The trail is some forty-three miles in length, but is accessible by road at several points. This access allows the opportunity for day hikes or longer overnight hiking and camping expeditions. For example, along with the AT the BMT forms a loop between Springer Mountain and the Three Forks area at the headwaters of Noontootla Creek. In spring time, many different kinds of wild flowers may be seen along these two trails. From Three Forks, the trail goes for almost nine miles to the swinging bridge over the

beautiful Toccoa River. The trail along the Grassy Bald and around the west side of John Dick Mountain provides views of Hawk and Springer Mountain and the valley of the Toccoa River, respectively. This is certainly an overnight trip or a long day walk. The next section (3.0 mi.) is over the top of Toonowee Mountain and ends at Hwy. 60. A nice trip is to park at Grizzle's store, hike to the river, eat lunch, rest and hike back to the highway.

The hike from Hwy. 60 over Walallah, Licklog and Rhodes Mountains is strenuous. It is

only recommended for those in fine physical condition. From Rhodes, the trail heads west and crosses the road at Skeenah Gap and then continues for 5-6 miles over the top of Wilscot Mountain to again reach Hwy. 60 at Wilscot Gap. From Hwy. 60, the trail goes up over Tipton Mountain (a steep climb) south to the Brawley Mountain Firetower, over Garland Mountain and down to the Dial-Tilley Bend Road. This too is a pleasant spring or fall day walk. A nice short section of the trail is from the Dial Road through a white pine forest to near the

top of Free Knob. Here the head of Lake Blue Ridge can be seen on the north and the Toccoa River on the south side. This is about a one mile walk.

The trail then follows the public roads along the Toccoa River, across the Shallowford Bridge, north along Aska Road 0.5 miles then turns west along Stanley Creek Road. The off-white diamond blazes may be occasionally seen along this road. Just past Mt. Garfield Stanley's house and property, the trail again is on Forest Service land and winds up along Fall Branch to the

waterfalls. The trail then turns up the mountain, past a clear cut and goes on up Rocky Mountain (Stanley Mountain) until it intersects the Forest Service Hiking Trail known as the Rich Mountain Trail.

Many people have already enjoyed walking along this trail which is being built by volunteer workers of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. If you would like more information, write P.O. Box 53271, Atlanta, GA, 30306, or write Edwin Dale, Box 724 Aska Road, Blue Ridge, GA, 30613
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