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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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BMTA President's Column - Bob Ruby

Bring a Friend!

I want to encourage you to bring a friend to a BMTA trail maintenance day. It can be a WIN-WIN-WIN situation for all involved. I was reminded of this opportunity during our December work day, rerouting the BMT within the Sisson Cherry Log community.



During our initial introductions I learned that Bob Sloan had brought two guests: Charles Fehnel and Nolan Shead. This was Charles' second BMT work trip with Bob. Both of these gentlemen are Bob's subdivision friends. They live in the same neighborhood and see each other walking all the time. This is a good way to invite people and have an instant car pool to the work event.

BMTA can always use more trail volunteers. When we invite friends and acquaintances, we all win:

The guest hopefully has an enjoyable and rewarding day in the woods with the shared comradery of his/her fellow volunteers.

The host gets the satisfaction of sharing one of his favorite pastimes with a friend.

BMTA gets a potential new volunteer and member, and at least a day's work.

I know Bob is not the first person to bring a friend, but I thought it worth encouraging the practice. Thanks to all who have or will bring someone.

Happy New Year to all. We have a number of exciting announcements for the BMT in the works for 2015. More to come soon.

It's Time To Renew ...

If you are a Life Member or joined (or renewed) in the last month or two, you can ignore this message. Your membership is current. Thank you.

The rest of you: It is time to renew. As you know, memberships in BMTA are for an entire calendar year, so everyone's membership ends on December 31. You can pay via PayPal using your credit card or send a check to the BMTA. Either way, you start by clicking here: <http://www.bmta.org/Membership.php>

Your membership is tax deductible in just a few months if you pay between now and the end of the year. Please also consider adding a tax deductible donation to BMTA before year end. BMTA has no paid staff, and all donations go to support the trail. Donations via check may be made using the printed membership form or via credit card or PayPal by clicking the Donate button on the [bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org) home page. Thanks for your support!

If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Ken Cissna, Membership Director, at kcissna@usf.edu. Thank you for your support of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association.

Bob Ruby
President, BMTA

Ken Cissna
Membership Director and Store Manager, BMTA

Upcoming Hikes ... by Ralph Heller-Hiking Director

Friday January 2 – Hiking Tour of Amicalola Falls State Park

Length: Approximately 5 miles/moderate

Elevation Gain: Approx. 1000 ft. from Visitor Center to overlook on Hike Inn Trail

Hike Description: This hike starts at the top of the falls and goes down to the base of the falls. From there it goes downhill to the Park Visitor Center. From the Visitor Center, we will continue through the archway which is the beginning of the Appalachian Approach Trail. We will leave the approach trail and hike up the old approach trail to the top of the falls and then to the Park Lodge Restaurant where we will eat lunch (optional). After lunch, we will hike about a mile on the Hike Inn Trail to a nice view site and then return to the top of the falls.

To register for the hike and get meeting time and location, contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky old-soldier67 AT [gmail.com](mailto:old-soldier67@gmail.com) or (706)889-5254.

Saturday Jan 24 – Easy Trek Hike From Highway 515/US76 through Sisson Cherry Log Mountain Development to Boardtown Road.

Length: Approximately 4 miles moderate/easy

Elevation Gain: Approx. 700 ft.

Hike Description: On this hike, we go through one of the few sections of the BMT that crosses private property. The trail goes mostly through coves which are away from the cabins in the development, but there is some road walk. We will pass by a lake with a small chapel and by one of only three shelters on the BMT. Then we will climb up Patterson Mountain, which is on the TN Valley Divide and has some great views of the surrounding mountains. This is also where a BMT trail re-route is in progress. From there, we will descend down to Boardtown Road, where we will shuttle back to the hike starting point. Afterwards, we will gather at the Pink Pig Restaurant for lunch (optional).

For more information and to register for this hike contact Hike Leader Ralph Heller rshbmta AT [gmail.com](mailto:rshbmta@gmail.com) or (770)-235-9760.

Continued on next page

Friday February 6 - Cloudland Canyon (Rim Trail)

Length: Approximately 7 miles - strenuous/moderate

Parking fee required - 2 hour drive from Ellijay

Hike Description: An exceptionally beautiful hike with two waterfalls in one of Georgia's nicest state parks. Consider renting a park cabin the night before or after the hike.

To register for the hike and get meeting time and location, contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky oldsoldier67 AT [gmail.com](mailto:oldsoldier67@gmail.com) or (706)889-5254.

Monday February 23 - Overnight hike to the Hike Inn

Length: 5.5 miles each way – easy/moderate

I have 14 rooms on hold. During Jan. and Feb. they are offering discount of 50% off on week days only. Normal rates are \$150 double occupancy and \$107 single occupancy plus tax. This includes an evening meal and breakfast. I have selected this date as late in the winter as possible in the hope of a chance of warmer weather. We are limited to 14 rooms this time. That would allow a maximum of 28 folks with 2 per room, if some folks double up. This is arguably one of the most popular BMTA hikes of the year. It's a great opportunity to get to know some of your fellow BMTA members better. Let's fill those rooms up!

To register and get your room call Beryl Ann at Hike Inn Reservations, Phone:1- 800-581-8032 and let them know you are with the BMTA. Then email me rshbmta AT [gmail.com](mailto:rshbmta@gmail.com) or call 770-235-9760 to let me know you are registered. I will let everyone on the list know the meeting time and location.

Note: *Reservations is often difficult to contact. Be persistent or leave Beryl a callback number.*

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
January 28, 2015
SUBMIT ANY ARTICLE AND/OR
PHOTOS TO
gnix (at) Ellijay (dot) com

TurtleTown Creek Falls Hike ... December 5th

By Clayton Webster

The TurtleTown Creek Falls Trail was enjoyed by 11 BMTA members and guests on Friday, December 5th. After a rainy but mild morning, at hike time, the rain had virtually stopped. Hikers did have to be cautious due to wet leaves and roots. Highlights of the trip were definitely the two waterfalls that were visited. Both were breathtaking and gave the opportunity for many photo opportunities! Beautiful vistas



were also seen from the old road bed along TurtleTown Creek and from Shinbone Ridge overlooking the Hiwassee River. This hike should be on your list of things to do!



Georgia Work Trip Report, December 2014

Submitted by Barry Allen

For our readers who may not be familiar with all of the BMT, the vast majority of the Benton MacKaye is located in National Forest or National Park lands. However, much of BMT section 7 is located on private property, and includes some road walk. A large chunk of this private property around Cherry Log runs through a development referred to as the Sisson Property, and is home to the only BMT shelter in Georgia. Occasionally, as new homes are built on the property, we must re-route our trail to keep both hikers and homeowners happy! Our December work trip involved just such an issue: a re-route on a 0.5 mile section of the Sisson property in Cherry Log.



On December 13, we pulled together a group of 12 members and 2 guests for a hard day of digging and blazing new trail, cutting snags, and removing trash. Our group met at Lamar's in Cherry Log, and after a quick cup of coffee and a biscuit, we discussed a plan of action put together by trip leader, **Ralph Heller**. After reviewing our tasks for the day, the convoy of nine vehicles drove over well maintained, PAVED roads to our destination. Splitting into two groups, we began side-hilling new trail on half the re-route while saw-man **Robert Collins** and swampers **Bob Ruby** and **Ralph Heller** worked cutting snags and deadfall from the other half of the new trail. After two and a half hours of work, we switched halves.....

And while the cutting and digging was in process, tree blazers **Darcy Douglas** and **Debra Guhl** began removing old blazes from the existing route and marking trees for new blazes as they waited for the temperature to rise above 45 degrees F. before beginning work with new paint. We all gathered for a trail-side lunch at 12:15, enjoying the views of surrounding mountains immensely.

Alas, after a good lunch, we discovered our batteries were getting a little low -- digging new trail tends to do that! But we made great progress on ½ mile of trail and by 3:00, we were left with about 200 yards of trail still needing heavy side-hilling plus a few water diversions here and there. So we have a plan for next month! Hope to see you then!

Thanks go out to **George Owen, Ralph Heller and Mark Yost** for their early work planning and laying out the new route with the Sissons. Also, thanks to member **Bob Sloan** for bringing two friends and guests, **Nolan Shead** and **Charles Fehnel** to help with the digging. Members **Phil and Debra Guhl, George Owen, Darcy Douglas, Bob Ruby, Brian Trinkle, Paul Brame, Jack Kennedy, and Robert Collins** put in a hard days' work; Ralph and I truly appreciate the **82 hours of work** logged on Saturday, December 13 by 14 dedicated individuals.

Georgia ...January Work-Trip Announcement

Please join us Saturday, January 10 as we work an ambitious plan involving multiple sections of trail. Our most pressing need is to finish last month's reroute on Section 7c, through the Sisson Property. However, we also need chainsaw work to clean up section 4. **IF WE GET GOOD TURNOUT**, I would like to work two teams of sawyers on section 4 (two certified sawyers and two or three swampers), removing blowdowns and deadfall in the 10" to 14" class. The balance of the crew will complete the work on last month's reroute of 7c.

For those working section 7c, we'll meet at Lamar's Country store, across from the Pink Pig at 8:30 (come at 8:00 if you want breakfast). From the Country Store, we'll have a short drive to the site of the re-route on Section 7c, starting work by 9:00. If we have enough RSVP's, including sawyers, I'll contact several of you separately about helping out on section 4 (we'll have a different gathering spot for this group). Please RSVP if you are able to come. Barry Allen (770-294-7384) or barry.w.allen@att.net

First-timers are most welcome! For what to expect, what to wear, what to bring, go to <http://www.bmta.org/pdfs/WorktripsWhatToExpect-revSep2011.pdf>

Trip leader is Barry Allen (770-294-7384)

WEATHER POSTPONEMENT: If weather forces a change of plans, the trip will NOT be cancelled in most cases. Instead we will simply postpone the trip for one week. Because of the changeable nature of North Georgia weather we wait as long as possible before postponing. Usually the decision is made early Friday evening and circulated immediately by email.

TN/NC Work-Trip For November 29th

By Tracy Sheffield BMT #19A Farr Gap to Slickrock Creek

What an awesome turnout we had for our November work trip. I always find a great sense of comradery as people arrive, greet and shake off the grogginess of early morning travel. As I gathered paperwork at my truck, the distant sounds of laughter and excited chatter filled the parking lot of the visitor's center bringing life to the cold spiritless void that it was just moments before.



The weather was perfect as 12 wilderness champions marched onto the trail at Farr Gap. We broke into 2 crews and made our way

toward Slickrock creek. The leaves, thick on the narrow trail gave each footfall a sense of controlled stumbling. Puffs of condensation filled the air with each breath and the stillness immediately filled my spirit with a soothing calmness. Life is good!

The collective cleared 7 trees with crosscut saw/axe and removed downed limbs for 1.81 miles toward Slickrock Creek. Many thanks to all!

Work hrs total: 72

Travel hrs total: 17



TN/NC Work-Trip For November 29th



TN/NC Work-Trip For December 27th

We people at the Benton MacKaye Trail Association are looking after your health. After sitting around playing with all your new toys and eating lots of candy, cake, and other high calorie foods, you will need to get out and get some serious exercise. So we have something to make it easy and fun to do. Join us the Saturday after Christmas for our monthly BMTA work trip, high atop the mountains at Whigg Meadow at 5000'. Info is below:

12/27, Saturday - TN/NC BMTA Work Trip - Whigg Meadow Section - The TN/NC trip will be, "tentative to weather conditions"... working from Whigg Meadow downhill to Mud Gap clearing with chainsaws and brush cutters/loppers as needed. We will carpool from Skyway Visitor Center to Whigg Meadow leaving a vehicle at the Mud gap lot for shuttle. Meet: 8:30 at the Tellico Grains Bakery or at 9 AM behind the Skyway Visitor Center. If you have questions or plan to attend this work trip please send an email to: tncmaint@bmta.org.

Richard Harris and Tracy Sheffield
423-253-6358 home
513-260-1184 cell

Section Maintainer's Corner ...

'There comes an hour of sadness with the setting of the sun, not for sins committed, but for things I have not done.' Author: anonymous

December tip of the month: When pruning tree branches obstructing the trail, make the pruning cut at the junction of the trunk and the branch being pruned. When removing a sapling, cut at or below the surface of the ground.

Every one reading this note is saying to themselves, "I know that rule, and I always prune close to the trunk." Yet I see 1" or 2" spikes on many of my weekend excursions, so someone hasn't gotten the message yet. The rule is there for a couple of very good reasons:

- A two inch spike at or below eye level is dangerous for everyone. I personally have punctured my hand on these spikes after stumbling on a root and grabbing at a tree trunk for balance. Even more dangerous is a 2-3 inch spike left sticking out of the ground – a possible cause of an impalement injury should someone stumble and fall.
- On a more aesthetic note, spikes are just plain ugly -- whether left protruding from the ground or from the trunk of a tree. Remember the Forest Service mantra: **leave no trace**. The saying is there for us all to follow. Part of 'leave no trace' is the care we take while pruning. Pruning cuts should not be noticed by people walking the trail. A cut close to the trunk will heal in short order; a 2" spike will be obvious for years. If a small tree will need constant pruning, many times it is better to remove the tree and be done with it.

Barry Allen

Georgia Maintenance Director, Benton MacKaye Trail Association

Scenes of the Benton MacKaye

Christmas Fern

Submitted by Barry Allen

Christmas fern is a widespread and common plant in our Southern Appalachian forests, and especially abundant along much of our trail. This fern is unique in that it is the only fern that remains green and obvious to hikers throughout the winter months, making it quite easy to identify. Interestingly, this fern grows upright in the summer months, but as the fall and winter progress, the fronds lay down on the forest floor. This trait helps protect the plant from much of the coldest weather and minimizes the portion of the fern open to exposure. The name 'Christmas Fern' originated in the early days of our nations' settlement; it was cut and used to provide much of the seasonal greenery by our ancestors. (But I have always thought the individual fronds looked like Santa's sleigh!) Christmas Fern, *Polystichum acrostichoides*, is eaten by ruffed grouse and wild turkey in the winter months, and to a lesser extent, it is browsed by deer and rabbits. From Thanksgiving until Easter, this beautiful plant provides much of the color to our forest floor as we hike the Benton MacKaye, enjoying the open winter vistas.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year To All Section Maintainers

In this season of Christmas and the New Year, I want to take a moment and thank our Section Maintainers for all of the hard work in 2014. The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is richer because of the participation of each and every one of you. Our trail would not be the same if we didn't have people like our section maintainers to take ownership of and responsibility for our trail.

I know the work is often thankless except on a personal level, but people DO notice your hard work. So on behalf of the BMTA, Bob Ruby and myself, we thank each of you for the hard work. We have received many kind acknowledgements during the year for the condition of the trail, and it is because of each and every one of you.

So Merry Christmas and have a joyous New Year.

Barry Allen
Georgia Maintenance Director
Benton MacKaye Trail Association