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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



VOLUME 31, ISSUE 6

JUNE 28, 2014

Yellow Creek Mountain Trail Grand Opening!!!

On Friday, May 30, 2014, a group of 14 volunteers and USFS personnel celebrated the official opening of the newest portion of the Benton MacKaye Trail, the former Yellow Creek Mountain Trail in Graham County, North Carolina. The ceremony included a brief summary of the process of



adding this trail to the length of the BMT, including the assistance of our United States Forest Service partners. There has long been a dangerous roadwalk to connect the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness portion of the trail to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park portion of the BMT. At last, a feasible, safer route became available to us late in December through our Forest Service partners.

Dick Evans, BMTA officer and volunteer maintainer, spearheaded the plans to reopen this 21.9 mile piece which was once the famed Appalachian Trail and make it part of the Benton MacKaye Trail. Ernie Engman, also a former BMTA officer and longtime volunteer, was his chief assistant. Together they worked their way through extremely thick growth to find the little used trail route. They managed to flag the route, enabling numerous volunteers to clear and reopen this magnificent piece of trail. In addition to our own members and friends, 2 groups came for a week each to add to the volunteer effort – the American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation and the Sierra Club. Their efforts were quite obvious!

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It has taken sawyers, brush cutters, loppers, more sawyers, more brush cutters, and more loppers to get the trail to a point it can be walked and enjoyed. The volunteers over the last few months cannot be listed here, but were many in number. Dick Evans did a yeoman's job organizing the work parties, often having to regroup based on weather conditions as well as the amount of work actually completed with each trip, which was often more than he expected. He is to be commended for his outstanding efforts and what could be called devotion to the completion of this reroute. In addition to all the on-the-ground work, Ernie Engman, aided by his son, William, also published a revised version of his Thru-Hikers' Guide to enable those hiking the entire length of the trail to have current information about the trail. Two through hikers have already been there, and 3 more will be in a few days!

While this trail will continue to need work to bring it to the quality to which we are accustomed, there is no question that it is beautiful and a great addition to the BMT. Wildflowers of many kinds were seen on the hike following the ceremony, including flame azalea, mountain laurel, and a pink lady's slipper. The views are absolutely spectacular, the kind which bring tears to one's eyes.

Those present at the Grand Opening included: Joe Bonnette (Retired USFS and President of the Partners of the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness), Darcy Douglas (Vice-President of BMTA), Ellie Doughty, Heath Emmons (USFS), Ernie Engman, William Engman, Dick Evans, Margaret Evans, Dave Hagen, Kim Hainge, Jim Kriner, Keith Mertz, Judy Wade, and Jeremy Waite (USFS).



Presidents Message

Walk With Me a Moment.....



Many of the things I think I know I learned by observing the world around me. Much to my chagrin, I have never been good at remembering names but rarely forget a face or the context in which I know it. I find this to be true in nature also with the plants I encounter. Caring for trail, for me, changes the importance of plants I encounter and elevates their perceived value in my life. The following are some observations I have made, or made anew, during my time working on the trail.

I try to get to my section each summer season with a weed-eater before the greenery in and along the trail corridor gets out of hand. I do so in the hope that even novices making one of their first hikes will not feel intimidated and will want to return to the BMT or a similar trail. What I found out this year was that if I am a little late, more wildflowers, like those shown here, will survive to be enjoyed by everyone, myself included. With many flowers in bloom and easily seen, I was able to trim around them and focus my efforts on the poisonous plants and the briars, which left unchecked, will grow tall and droop across the trail later in the season.



I was a slow learner growing up when it came to the Poison Ivy and Poison Oak plants. I played in the woods a lot and nearly every summer fell victim one or more times to the intense and persistent rash that came from incidental contact. As I matured I developed stronger will not to scratch the rash in my waking hours. More importantly, I gained a healthy appreciation for the adage "leaves of three, leave it be; leaves of five, you'll survive." In more recent years, I have observed that if I get a little Poison Ivy early in the season, I seem to build up a little tolerance to it as the summer goes on. Whether this is just a coincidence or not, it brings me some measure of comfort when doing my late summer maintenance.



I have found that the small limbs of the unusual leafed plant shown here can be squeezed and rolled in your fingers and will yield a scent almost identical to that of Lemon Pledge. Yes I am speaking of the furniture polish. If you hit one of these in the trail corridor with a swing blade or weed-eater, the pleasant aroma will fill the air! You can also take the roots of the plant and brew a pleasant tea with only a jar, water, and the power of the sun. Its leaves grow in several configurations including right mitt, left mitt, and no mitt. For those not already familiar with this one, it is Sassafras and is quite common along the BMT.



The little red flowers shown here are not as showy as some of the larger bloomers found along the trail. For me though, these will always be remembered for the company they keep. Back in the nineteen nineties, I maintained a stretch of Section 5. While quietly taking lunch at Garland Gap, I was blessed to witness hummingbirds putting on an air show as they busily worked a group of these. While I have not yet witnessed the same show on Section 1, I hold out hope that I will one day. They are found in abundance in late June at Owen's Overlook.



I have found that where I see plants with a dark spot in the center of the leaf in June, a return visit in late July will reward me with a nice showy flower. Hence I am mindful of its presence when brushing out trail in early summer and leave all that I reasonably can.



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I was very surprised on the Summer Solstice this year to find Native Azalea in full bloom on Section 1. It was a full five weeks earlier that the group of us working in Tennessee on Section 11c witnessed large groupings in full bloom along the Big Frog Trail. Perhaps there was a difference in the varieties of Azalea observed or, more likely, the difference in elevation between the two settings is greater than I would have guessed. I did also discover on the recent Solstice that a cluster of tree leaves prematurely turning red and orange, in just the right sun light, was every bit as spectacular to observe as the prettiest flame Azalea.



REMINDER AND UPDATE ON TELLICO MONTHLY WORK TRIP **JULY 12** TO HENDERSON MTN TRAIL

Just a reminder to consider joining us for the monthly trail work trip in the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest on **Saturday July 12**. Meet at the Tellico Ranger Station at 9 AM. Bring a day pack with lunch and plenty of water (2-3 liters), and wear long pants and sturdy boots. We will provide helmets, gloves and safety glasses. We will be working on the Henderson Mtn Trail, which is near the Bald River Trail and is linked to the Cow Camp Trail and the Panther Branch Trail, making for some great hiking and backpacking possibilities. From those trails, hikers and backpackers can link to the Kirkland Creek and Brookshire Creek Trails as well as the Benton MacKaye Trail and the Warriors Passage Trail. Quite a network of many miles of trails.

If you are considering joining us, give me a call or email me. My info is below. Or you can sign up directly on the MeetUp page <http://www.meetup.com/Cherokee-Hiking-Club-of-Southeast-Tennessee/events/190563732/>. Please note that this trip is limited to 20 participants, so sign up quickly.

Rick Harris HarrisRi@aol.com cell 513-260-1184.

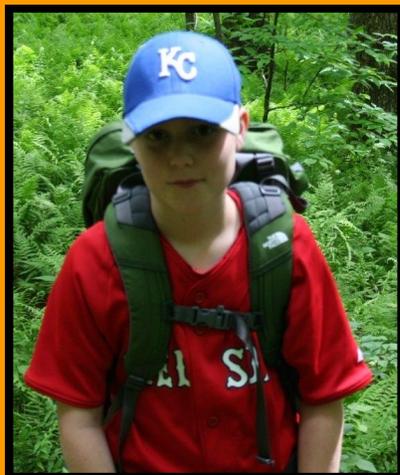
....LEAVING A FOOTPATH FOR GENERATIONS TO FOLLOW

By Marge Heller

On, [Wednesday, June 4th](#), BMTA Hiking Director, Ralph Heller, led a 3 mile hike on the Trout Adventure Trail. The two hikers that joined him were Bob Morgan of Cherry Log, GA and his grandson, Carter Morgan of Corpus Christi, TX. Carter is 10 years old and in the 4th grade. Carter likes to visit his grandparents in Georgia and enjoys fishing with his grandpa. The hike was a good experience and when he called home to tell his dad about it, he said "maybe next year I can hike further". After this hike, Carter went to North Georgia Mountain Outfitters in Ellijay to pick up the Trout Adventure Trail patch that he earned by hiking and experiencing the trail.



Photos of Ralph and Carter, taken by Bob Morgan.



By Ralph Heller – Hiking Director

In June we had two hikes.

The first hike, to the suspension Bridge on [June 6](#), was led by Ralph Heller and had 12 participants. The day was beautiful, starting out a little foggy on the drive out to the Suspension Bridge trail head on Highway 60. By the time the hike started the sky was clear and the morning was pleasantly cool. We hiked out across the bridge, ate a leisurely lunch in the flats along the river and then headed back. Along the way we spotted a small black snake, the only animal life seen along the trail unless a millipede counts. About twenty minutes from the cars, we heard a thunder storm approaching, and about ten minutes later, the rains came down. There was just enough precipitation to dampen those who did not have rain gear or, like myself, who chose not to don their rain protection. The shower, however, was cool and refreshing. This has always been a favorite hike and again this time did not disappoint.

The second hike, on [June 21](#), was led by Hank Baudet and had 8 participants. This hike started at Boyd Gap off Highway 64 near the Ocoee Whitewater Center and went down to the Old Copper Road Trail along the Ocoee River to the Whitewater Center. This hike was originally planned to end at the center, but it was such a beautiful day and the scenery along the river with the rafters, kayakers and canoers was so enticing, that it was decided to continue along the river on the Rhododendron Trail to Thunder Rock Campground. A good time was had by all. Timing was great also, as the rain came just after the hike ended.



Upcoming Hikes

By Ralph Heller – Hiking Director

Friday July 11: Emery Creek Falls – 5.4 miles in and out. Very scenic hike to stay cool in mid-summer is along Emery Creek deep in the Cohuttas. Involves about 12 stream crossings and ends in a pair of waterfalls, the first 40-50 ft. high and the second about 25 ft. high. Bring hiking poles for stability during stream crossings and sturdy shoes. Be prepared to get wet. There is not much elevation gain, but there is rough footing, as the trail climbs over some large boulders at the confluence with Holly Creek. For those who would like to take a cool dip, there are some nice swimming holes along Holly Creek. Bring lunch.

Hike Leader is Mike Pilvinsky. To sign up for hike and for meeting time and location, call Mike at 706-273-2086

Friday August 1: Beech Bottom Trail to Jacks River Falls – 10 easy miles. Although this hike is about 10 miles round trip, it is relatively easy due to little elevation gain. It follows an old abandoned road bed. Highlights are Jacks River at 4 miles and beautiful Jacks River Falls at 4.6 miles. To cool off, some folks say the pool at the base of the falls is the best swimming hole in GA. Bring lots of water and lunch.

Hike Leader is Mike Pilvinsky. To sign up for hike and for meeting time and location, call Mike at 706-273-2086.

GEORGIA WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

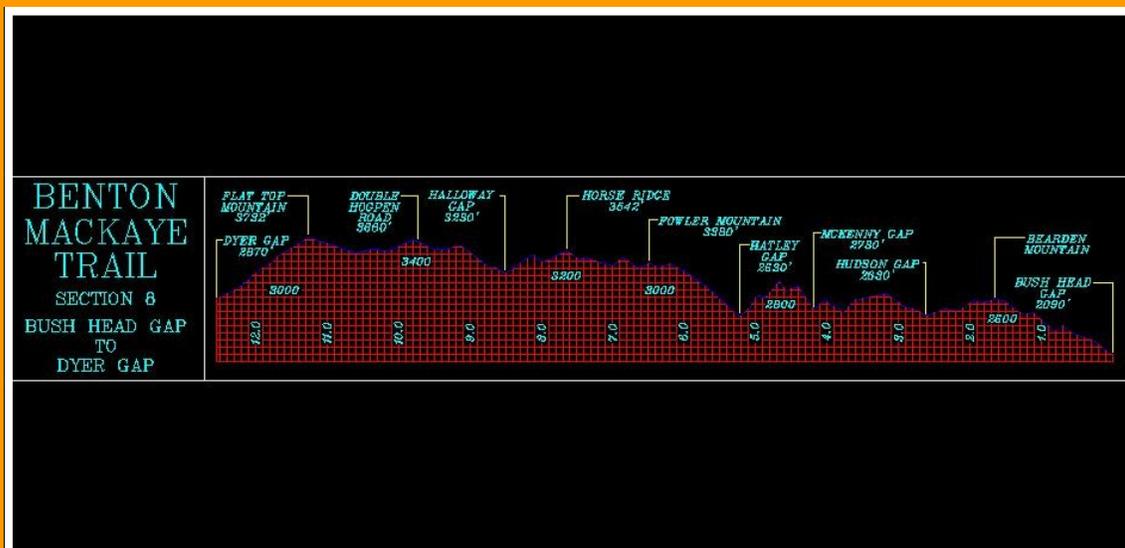
July 12, 2014

Please join us July 12 on beautiful Sections 8a and 8b (Bushyhead Gap to McKenny Gap). Our plan for the day is to work selectively on sidehilling and refreshing water diversions, but to pay special attention to vegetation cutback along both sections. Let's meet at 8:00 at L & A Country Store (across from the Pink Pig) or at Bushyhead Gap trailhead at 9:00. As always, bring plenty of water; remember it is July! (And if someone would like to bring a cool, refreshing watermelon for an end of the day treat, I'm sure there would be no objections.....)

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 leaders are Barry Allen (770-294-7384) and George Owen.

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.



Meadow Branch Bridge Completed

By Dick Evans

The completion of one of the last parts of the 21 mile Yellow Creek Reroute Project for the Benton MacKaye Trail was accomplished by the replacement of the old bridge over the creek at Meadow Branch. The existing bridge was very dated, and, although safe, gave some pause when crossing it. As the culmination of a three month project between the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Cheoah Ranger District and Brookfield Renewables, a new bridge span



was engineered by the Forest Service, and was installed. The new bridge is 20 feet long, 4 feet wide with toe kicks for safety when crossing the stream. The entire new bridge weighed over 3,000 pounds. Jeremy Waite from the USFS Cheoah Ranger District coordinated the engineering, ordering of materials, and installation. Helping him were Randall Sellars and Hunter, a summer intern on the District. The BMTA was represented by Dick Evans, James Smith, Dave Hagen, Dave Dotson, Jim Kriner and Joe Bonnette. Due to Jeremy's pre-construction, the entire project was started at 9 AM and we were eating fried chicken, potatoes and brownies at 1 PM, served by Margaret Evans and Tammie Smith.

This trailhead will be officially named the Jim Burchfield Trailhead in a ceremony on [July 11th](#). Jim, a long time USFS employee, was a particular supporter of the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail, and worked unceasingly to keep it maintained during his time with the Forest Service.

The only significant work to be done on the entire reroute is the building of a set of access stairs at the crossing at Old Field Gap Road. Currently serviced by a 0.5 mile walk along a graveled Forest Road, this road walk will be eliminated when the stairs are completed.

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Meadow Branch Bridge Completed



WILDERNESS ACT ANNIVERSARY

2014 is the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act in our beautiful country. A number of events have been planned in the Southeast to celebrate this event. The Great Smoky Mountain National Park, which is managed as wilderness, and through which about a third of our trail passes, has events planned. The Cherokee National Forest has monthly hikes scheduled in wilderness areas, several of which will be on the Benton MacKaye Trail. Roughly a third of our trail is in this forest, too. Georgia and the Chattahoochee National Forest also have events planned. Our club will be participating on September 7 in Dahlonega, Georgia. We sincerely hope you will avail yourself of some of these opportunities to support this excellent bill which has enabled keeping wildlife healthy, waters pristine, and the forest developing as nature would have it in large enough tracts to considerably add to the health of people in our country.



For more information..... See: <http://www.wilderness50th.org/>

Congratulations To The Following Hikers For Their BMT Thru-Hike Completions

Craig Smith
Jet Lag
Brevard, NC
05/19/2014
06/07/2014
Northbound
Thru-hike

Sam Scheffler
Shepherd
Oak Ridge, TN
05/18/2014
06/08/2014
Northbound
Thru-hike

Joanna Swanson
Someday
Askov, MN
11/06/2012
12/01/2012
Southbound
Thru-hike

Teresa Tuers
Mother Teresa
Asheville, NC
05/19/2014
06/07/2014
Northbound
Thru-hike

Alec Readell
Limpy
Oak Ridge, TN
05/18/2014
06/08/2014
Northbound
Thru-hike

E. J. Allred
(n/a)
Bethesda, MD
05/16/2014
06/04/2014
Northbound
Thru-hike



BMTA Hosts Trail Adoption

88 THURSDAY, MAY 29, 2014

TIMES-COURIER • ELLIJAY, GEORGIA

BMTA hosts trail adoption

Benton MacKaye Trail Association

The Benton MacKaye Trail, which begins in eastern Gilmer County, is getting longer.

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is hosting a trail adoption ceremony Friday, May 30, at 10 a.m., to make the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail an official part of the Benton MacKaye Trail, bringing the footpath's total length to 300 miles.

This adoption allows hikers easy and safe access between the Joyce Kilmer and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This routes the

trail through Fontana Village and over Fontana Dam with the Appalachian Trail, then follows the Lakeshore Trail and other trails in the park for nearly 100 miles.

Benton MacKaye, the association's namesake, first proposed the concept of the Appalachian Trail, and was a forester, regional planner and supporter of recreational use of the forests as a way to deal with the pressures of urban life.

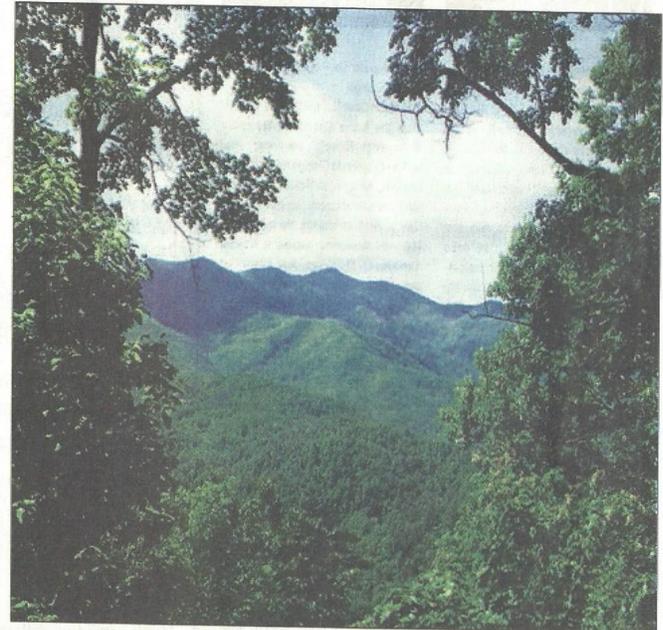
The Benton MacKaye Trail is a wilder and much less used version of its more famous cousin, the Appalachian Trail. In general, it fol-

lows a route MacKaye proposed as a feeder trail to the larger trail.

The adoption ceremony will take place on Old Field Gap Road, off Meadow Branch Road in the northern Graham County area, N.C. Meadow Branch joins Route 129 in the Tapoco area near the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness Trailhead.

Following the ceremony, BMTA folks will lead public hikes of either 1.8 miles to Meadow Branch Bridge or 7.6 miles to Fontana Village to show off the new trail.

Participants should bring rain jackets, water and snacks if



Contributed photo

A view from along the new section of the Benton MacKaye Trail.

desired. The trail is well cleared but expect a steep and rugged hike. It is suitable for

younger children capable of hiking those distances in a reasonable time frame.

To learn more about the trail and association, visit www.bmta.org.

OK, ma'am, take your time. Which of these guys stuck up your liquor store but took only two cases of Boone's Farm wine?



ANNUAL MEETING OCTOBER 17-19, 2014

By Darcy Douglas

Our Annual Meeting will be held this year at Coker Creek Village the weekend of October 17-19. Coker Creek is located on Hwy. 68 in Tennessee between Ducktown and Tellico Plains. We have stayed here before and enjoyed it thoroughly!



There are several arrangements for places to spend the night. There are bunk houses and cabins, as set out below. Food is served in the cafeteria, and the lunch Saturday will be a brown bag lunch for our hikes.

Each person needs to make his or her own reservations for meals as well as for preferred sleeping quarters.

We will have hikes scheduled Friday, a learning activity and social time on Friday evening, hikes Saturday, then the meeting itself late afternoon and evening. We will elect officers for 2015 and hear the State of the Trail report. Reports from Board members regarding membership, finances, and accomplishments of the year will also be shared. I hope you enjoy our entertainment after the formal part of the meeting! More later on that...

Please make your reservations through Leal at Coker Creek. She can be flexible with the number of nights and meals – just let her know what you need when you call or email.

Leal Giddens - Office Manager
Coker Creek Village
Email: info@cokercreekvillage.com
Telephone: 800-448-9580

Annual Meeting Options

5 Meals*/2 Nights Lodging***	Per Person:
Bunk House	\$115
Leadership Cabin	\$155
3 Meals**/1 Night Lodging	
Bunk House	\$72
Leadership Cabin	\$112
Saturday Lunch and Dinner Only	\$20

The above options can be modified to fit each attendee's needs during the weekend.

Lunch on Saturday will be a brown bag lunch.

- * Dinner Friday through breakfast Sunday
- ** Lunch Saturday through breakfast Sunday
- *** Bunk house lodging offers sleeping areas only, with cabins that sleep from 4 per cabin up to 25. Smaller cabins (sleeping 6 and under and one 12-sleeper) use an area shower house; larger cabins (sleeping 8 and up) have baths in the cabins. This will be shared housing for your group. Each person will provide his own linens (twin bed sheets or sleeping bag, pillow, towels).

Leadership Cabins are upscale cottages, sleeping 2-4 (depending on bed configuration)
 Each cabin has a queen bed (two cabins have sets of bunk beds), a private bath,
 sitting area, small refrigerator, microwave oven, all linens provided.
 There are eight (8) of these.

SEFTC BIENNIAL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 18-21, 2014

Union County Community Center/Vogel State Park - Blairsville, Georgia

Friday (9/19): Presenter, Janet Zeller, Manager, U.S. Forest Service

Accessibility Office

Saturday (9/20): Speaker, Ron Tipton, Executive Director, Appalachian Trail

Conservancy

-----General Schedule-----

Thursday, Sept. 18

11:00 a.m. - Registration desk opens at Community Center

1:00 p.m. – Short hikes available in area – depart Community Center parking

Friday, Sept. 19

9:00–11:40 a.m. – General Welcome and Opening Plenary Session

1:15–2:45 p.m. & 3:00-4:30 – Workshops

6:00-6:30 p.m. – Short lake/waterfall hike at Vogel State Park

*6:30 p.m. – Barbeque and program, indoor pavilion at Vogel State Park

Saturday, Sept. 20

Hike Day – Hikes begin as early as 8 & 9 a.m. – some are all day, some half-day

*6:00 p.m. Banquet, Brackett Center, Blairsville

Sunday, Sept. 21

8:30 – 10:00 a.m. – Workshops

10:05 – 10:45 a.m. – SEFTC General Business Meeting

11:00 a.m. Some short hikes or leave for home

**Indicates a separate meal fee shown on the registration form*

[Registration form is posted on the website](#)

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

You must be registered to attend all sessions, hikes, dinners

Registration Fee: \$30 through August 30; \$40 September 1 and after