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## BMTA Officers 2014-2015

President:	Bob Ruby
Vice President:	Tom Keene
Secretary:	Joy Forehand
Treasurer:	Margaret Evans
GA M/C:	Barry Allen
TN/NC M/C:	Tracy Sheffield
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Ralph Heller
Membership/Store:	Ken Cissna
Publicity:	George Owen
Conservation:	Steve Bayliss
Past President:	David Blount
State Rep GA:	Mark Yost
State Rep TN/NC:	Rick Harris



**BMTA Headquarters**

# Benton MacKaye Trail Association



VOLUME 31, ISSUE 10

OCTOBER 25, 2014

## Distinguished Service Award Goes to Clayton Pannell For Saving Trail Possibility in TN, NC

Clayton Pannell of Etowah, TN was the recipient of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association's (BMTA) highest award on October 18 at the Saturday Annual Meeting, in Coker Creek Village, TN, for his years of effort to secure permission for the establishment of the Benton MacKaye Trail across the two states of Tennessee and North Carolina. This is only the second time in its 34-year history the organization has given this honor, the Distinguished Service Award.



**TOP AWARD WINNER Clayton Pannell (R) is shown with George Owen who presented Clayton the BMTA Distinguished Service Award on October 18.**

The 294-mile Benton MacKaye Trail was begun in Georgia in 1980 and completed for about eighty miles to the Tennessee state line in 1989, where soon it was allowed to continue on the Cherokee National Forest a few miles to U.S. Highway 64 in Tennessee's southeastern corner.

There it was stymied from further extension for much of the 1990s and into the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At that time the Cherokee National Forest felt there was no need for another long-distance trail, and was supported in this position also by the Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina. Thanks to the decade-long efforts on several fronts led primarily by Clayton, the situation was changed shortly after 2000, and the trail was allowed to proceed through both forests and also to run the length of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The trail was then quickly completed along its entire three-state proposed route in 2005 with a ceremony held at Mud Gap on the Cherohala Highway near the TN/NC state line. The BMTA's trail construction director who supervised much of this construction through two remote national forest lands was also a McMinn County resident, Ken Jones of Athens, and in this effort he was much assisted by Clayton. At one point in all this Clayton also served two years as BMTA president.

One of several lines in the award expresses it about Mr. Pannell's efforts: "Your service and leadership with land managers in the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service led to the completion of the trail." Repeatedly over years Clayton led BMTA members on work trips on other Cherokee National Forest trails to show that there was a dedicated work force available to build and maintain the Benton MacKaye Trail if it should be built, then he constantly reminded Forest Service leaders of the possibilities such a trail would offer.

The Benton MacKaye Trail, named after the "founding father" of the Appalachian Trail, runs for scores of miles through the Ocoee and Tellico ranger districts of the Cherokee National Forest, thus making it the primary long-distance hiking trail in the southern half of the Cherokee forest, even as the Appalachian Trail is the prominent trail in the northern half of that forest above the national park. The Benton MacKaye Trail has been termed "the Southeast's other Appalachian Trail" by the *New York Times*.

The trail is here now across southeast Tennessee, southwest North Carolina, and the Great Smokies for all to hike in good part because of the continuous efforts and the foresight of Clayton Pannell. Clayton, we celebrate you and give you our heartfelt thanks.

###

## President's Message ...

As we start a new year for the BMTA, I want to thank David Blount for his outstanding service as BMTA President for the past two years. We will continue to benefit from David's experience on the Board. I also want to recognize those finishing their Board service (for now): Darcy Douglas, Vice-President; Marge Heller, Publicity; and Bill Hodge, TN/NC Maintenance. I'm sure they will continue their active service to the BMT.

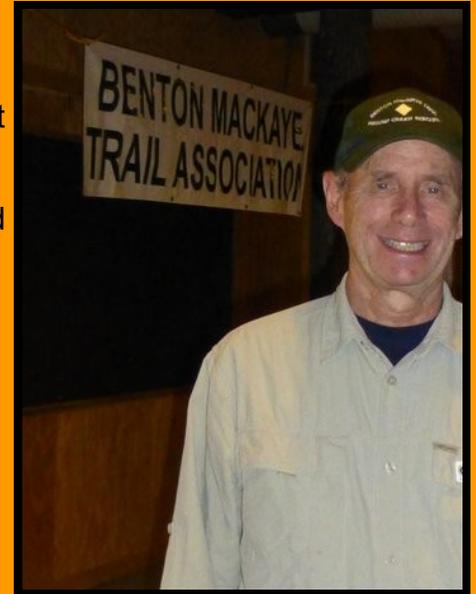
I would like to welcome four new members to the Board: Barry Allen, GA Maintenance Director; Tracy Sheffield, TN/NC Maintenance Director; Ken Cissna, Membership & Store Manager; and Mark Yost, State Representative - Georgia. Ideally the Board will always have a mixture of experience and institutional memory with new ideas and enthusiasm.

As you all know, the BMT follows a fabulous route through some of the most pristine and remote sections of the Southern Appalachians. One of my duties for several years has been receiving the 300-Miler forms from thru-hikers and section-hikers who have completed the BMT. You can see the list, with links to their trail journals, on [www.bmta.org/300-Milers](http://www.bmta.org/300-Milers).

Generally, the BMT gets very positive reviews, but occasionally we get some negative feedback when maintenance of a portion of the trail slipped below our standards. Generally this occurs during or after the fast-growing summer season. I challenge all of you who can to help maintain the BMT, especially in the remote sections of TN/NC, where we have fewer local maintainers than in Georgia. To help alleviate this problem we have recently switched maintenance of the Big Frog Wilderness from TN/NC to Georgia where we have a larger population of members. Please don't think of maintenance as a burden. I know many people for whom maintenance has become the most rewarding, fun and collegial part of their trail activity.

Fall is the most pleasant time of year to be in the woods whether hiking, backpacking or maintaining, so I encourage you all to get out on the BMT. I hope to see you there.

Bob



## BMTA Annual Meeting Weekend Highlights

By George Owen

Our Benton MacKaye Trail Association's October 17-19 Annual Meeting Weekend at Coker Creek Village, TN smoothly ran along without a significant hitch with approximately forty in attendance, a better-than-usual number at the peak of the meeting on Saturday evening for this fairly remote facility.



The weekend included hikes all three days, good lodging, very plentiful tummy-filling food, a board meeting, nighttime outdoor campfires two evenings, and then the official annual business meeting Saturday evening, 7:00-8:30. Planning and keeping all this on track was our vice president Darcy Douglas; yes, it falls yearly to the VP to put the annual meeting together. (Great job, Darcy!)

Saturday eve's annual meeting began with a report on the state of the trail and the association by outgoing President David Blount, followed by the election of the 2015 BMTA Board (which took office that evening), some other reports and a special AV showing on the new Yellow Mountain BMTA relocation, and concluded with the presentation of awards.

For the second time ever, a Distinguished Service Award was given, this time to Clayton Pannell for his years of special effort in keeping alive the possibility of our trail continuing through the Cherokee



and Nantahala National Forests and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. His efforts over years came to fruition in the early part of this century, finally. (See details on this award in another story in this newsletter.)

Continued On Next Page

## BMTA Annual Meeting Weekend Highlights

When the election came around, the Committee on Nominations Chair Darcy Douglas presented the official slate to be considered that she and the other three committee members, Rick Harris, Marge Heller, and Tom Keene, submitted. This slate was subsequently approved without any other nominations from the floor. So now the new BMTA Board for these new twelve months is:

President – Bob Ruby (new to position)

Vice President – Tom Keene (new to position)

Secretary – Joy Forehand (reelected)

Treasurer – Margaret Evans (reelected)

GA Maintenance Coordinator – Barry Allen (first time on board)

TN/NC Maintenance Coordinator – Tracy Sheffield (first time on board)

Smokies Coordinator – Dick Evans (reelected)

Hiking Director – Ralph Heller (reelected)

Membership and the Store – Ken Cissna (new – first time on board)

Publicity – George Owen (new to position)

Conservation – Steve Bayliss (reelected)

(There are three non-elected positions – newsletter editor, webmaster, and immediate Past President [now outgoing Pres. David Blount], and the two state representative positions will be appointed by the new president.)

The weekend came to a close Sunday with packing up after breakfast, followed by a hike on the nearby Unicoi Turnpike Trail, where participants trekked in the footsteps of the infamous Cherokee “Trail of Tears” of the late 1830s.

## Annual Meeting Awards & Recognitions...

Beyond the Distinguished Service Award for Clayton Pannell, these other important awards and recognitions were part of the BMTA Annual Meeting October 18 Saturday evening event:

**Dick Evans** and **Ernie Engman** each received special recognition plaques for their leadership in establishing and completing the major BMT Yellow Creek Mountain BMT reroute in record time between the first of this year and May.

**Marge Heller** was awarded a plaque for her five-year service as Publicity Director in which time she secured more publicity and recognition for our trail and the BMTA than ever before.

**David Blount** was given a plaque as outgoing president for his two years of service to the association in that position.

**Kent Mathews** and **Pam Mathews** jointly received the Maintainer of the Year Award with their names engraved on the award Pulaski.

**Darcy Douglas** was presented a special pink hat (her often-used favorite color) by David Blount for her several special efforts this year, including lining up the annual meeting, chairing the Committee on Nominations, etc.

**Dick Evans** was presented a large picture by Ralph and Marge Heller showing Dick at one of his favorite overlooks on the Yellow Creek Mountain relocation.

**Dozens of maintainers**, both present and absent that evening, were presented with the new BMTA maintainer shirt award each for giving thirty or more hours of work during the year.

**Seven maintainers were singled out for safety helmets for high work hours this year.** They are:

Dick Evans - 257  
Darcy Douglas - 146  
Rick Harris - 150  
Barry Allen - 117  
David Blount - 94  
Ernie Engman - 82  
Steve Davis - 70



We all offer our congratulations to these for their outstanding service to the BMTA and the trail.

# BMTA Annual Meeting Awards and Recognitions



**BMTA Display**



**Barry Allen - New Georgia Maintenance Director**



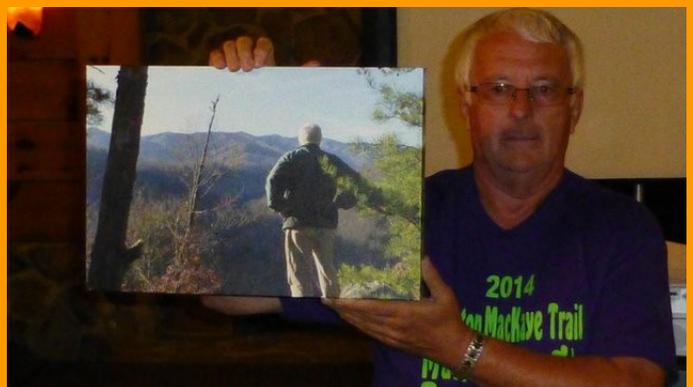
**Ken Cissna - New Membership Dir./Store**



**2014 Maintainer T-shirts awarded hours**



**Hard Hats awarded to top Maintainers**



**Dick Evans awarded for his work on Yellow Creek**

# BMTA Annual Meeting Awards and Recognitions



**Marge Heller awarded plaque for five years as Publicity Chair**



**Ernie Ingman and Dick Evans - plaques awarded for work on Yellow Creek**



**Darcy Douglas - outgoing VP - awarded "pink" hat**



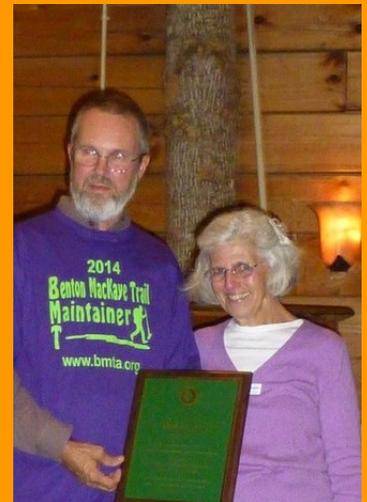
**Margaret and Dick Evans with Yellow Creek Re-Route Photo**



**Clayton Pannell Distinguished Service Award**

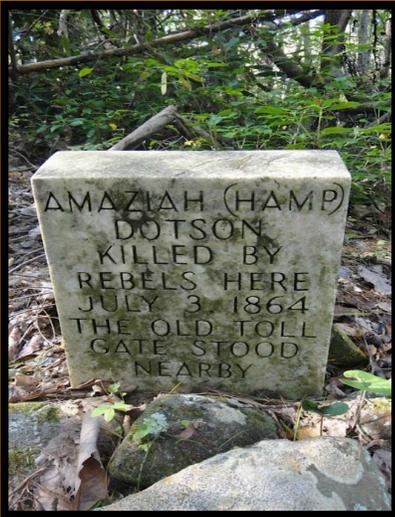


**Bob Ruby - New BMTA President**



**David Blount- Out Going President**

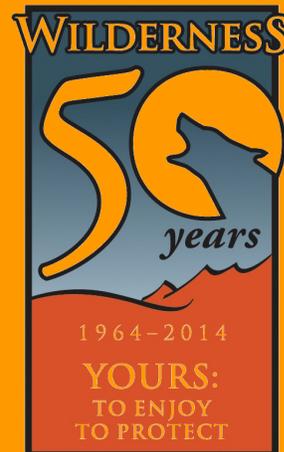
# Annual Meeting Photos ...



# 50th Anniversary Of Wilderness Celebration

By Darcy Douglas

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association participated in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest's celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of wilderness on September 6. The main speaker was Dale Bosworth, former Chief of the United States Forest Service. His talk was quite inspiring! The weather was beautiful, there was something for everyone, and several BMTA members were there. Gilbert Treadwell assisted greatly, telling visitors about our trail. It was so helpful to have both the "old" and the brand new maps on the display itself. Many wanted to know about how the new piece of trail was different from the old, which some had hiked. I hope we'll keep both in the display for some time. Walt Cook, George Owen, Ted and Kay Reissing, and a number of others were there for the day. John Campbell of the USFS chaired our planning team through the Co-Trails group, and did a masterful job – everything went quite smoothly at the event.



Here is the link to a small collection of images captured at the celebration in Dahlonega this past Saturday on our Forest's Flickr site:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/chattoconeef/sets/72157647363265531/>

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:  
November 26, 2014  
SUBMIT ANY ARTICLE AND/OR  
PHOTOS TO: [gnix \(at\) ellijay.com](mailto:gnix@ellijay.com)**

## Section Maintainers' Corner

**By Barry Allen**

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition biennial meeting in Blairsville, Georgia. One of the breakout sessions during the three day meeting included a field visit to a section of the Appalachian Trail for a session entitled "Trail Construction and Maintenance". The session was hosted by Morgan Summerville, Southern Regional Director, Appalachian Trail Conservancy. **Time well spent!**

After the conference, I tried to think of a few ways to share some of the tips gleaned from Morgan and a few great people from the USFS with whom I have been privileged to spend time during the last several years. In a regular monthly feature for the BMTA Newsletter, I'll try to highlight a few of these pointers. Please pass these tips to others; after all, as one great American author was fond of saying, "*Knowledge is like money; to be of value, it must be circulated.*" And that is my challenge to each of you: share your knowledge. Most of you have been maintaining trails quite a long time. Help me with this monthly column by sending in your own tips -- tips that we can all use to improve our trail.

So here goes – our first of many "tips of the month."

**October tip of the month: When brushing out a section of trail with a pronounced slope, focus your effort to the up-slope side of the hill.**

Now, let's take a minute and understand why this is so important. The softest and most erodible portion of any trail is the edge closest to the downhill side of the trail. Branches, small trees, and briars growing into the trail from the up-slope will force traffic to this soft, downslope edge, *thereby promoting trail creep and erosion*. As a section maintainer, we should do everything possible to minimize foot traffic on the soft, downslope edge of the trail. Leave some growth on the downslope edge, and focus on clearing the upslope. By following this clearing guideline, foot traffic should migrate to the harder and stronger upslope edge, helping to minimize erosion and trail creep from foot traffic. Now, this doesn't mean we want to leave branches and briars growing into the trail from the downslope side. Just use your discretion. Perhaps take a branch out on the downslope where you may take an entire sapling out on the upslope.

As a side note, a very common problem on our trails is a reluctance to cut back rhododendron as heavily as needed. I find myself walking on the soft edge of the trail quite often, trying to avoid the beautiful rhododendron of North Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina. A little more aggressive cutting on the upslope will go a long way toward improving our trail health – and yes, even rhododendron!

Barry Allen

Georgia Maintenance Director, Benton MacKaye Trail Association

# Scenes Of The Benton MacKaye

## Grass of Parnassus

Submitted by Barry Allen

This picture was taken in early October on section 2 of the BMT, close to Bryson Gap.

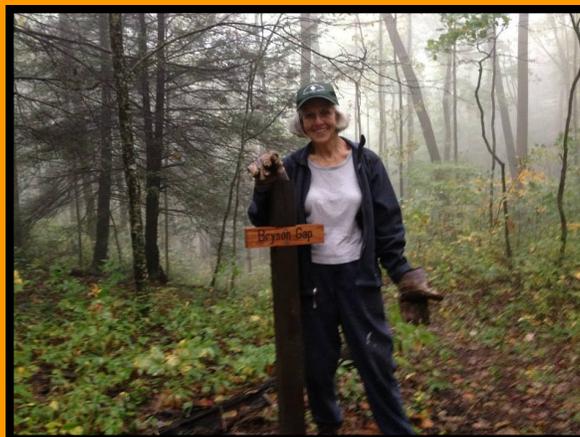
(Unfortunately, my camera just does not do this flower justice.) Grass of Parnassus can produce one of the prettiest flowers to be seen anywhere, with the purest white bloom offset by intricate yellow designs on the petals. This flower shows up around water sources on our trail typically in August, September and early October. It can often be seen in spring creeks, flowing over a granite base, very often accompanied by salamanders and other spring creek life. Grass of Parnassus (pronounced like the 'asses' in 'molasses', according to our very own Darcy Douglas), deserves a minute to be enjoyed. Take the time to look at a new bloom up close. You won't be disappointed. This particular variety, the Kidneyleaf Grass of Parnassus, has a healthy population in Georgia, but is endangered in a couple of states to our north.



## Georgia Work Trip Report, October 2014

Submitted by Barry Allen

2b or not 2b, that is the question—  
Whether 'tis Nobler in the mind to suffer  
The blisters and bug-bites of outrageous fortune  
Or to take pulaskis against a Sea of troubles,  
And by opposing, end them? To dig, to side-hill—  
No more; and by the side hill, to say we end  
The foot-ache, and the thousand Natural problems  
That trails are heir to?



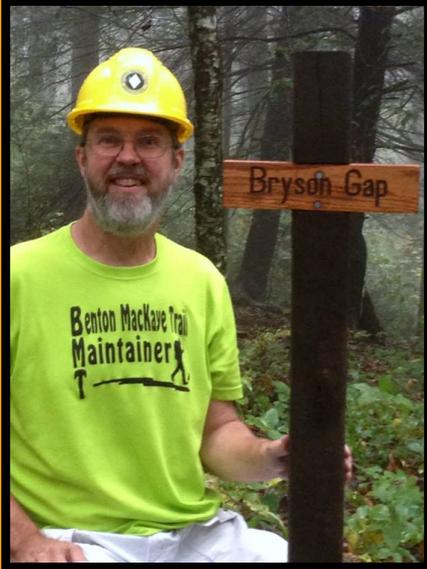
On Saturday, October 11 our merry band of Shakespeare fans took to the woods to answer the question, 2b, or not 2b. Unfortunately, with early morning rain and thunderstorms on the radar, 2b was almost not to be. We bravely drove in to the trail over a muddy, barely serviceable Forest Service road and sat in our trucks while a bit of heavy rain passed over. As the rain let up, we grabbed our tools and listened to a brief safety talk before heading into the woods. We were all thankful as Mr. George Owen volunteered to make sure the inside of our trucks stayed dry for an hour or two, setting our minds at ease as we headed up through the rain and fog to work Georgia's section 2b.

We placed a new sign at Bryson Gap, and then worked south toward Wildcat Ridge, clearing, side hilling, removing blow downs, and installing water diversions along the way. The weather improved throughout the morning, but with the early rain and some special plans for the afternoon, we didn't quite finish all we had hoped to do. But the work will be there next month, as we continue our very own Shakespeare Revival on 2b.

What started as a wet morning in the woods eventually turned into a fine October day. We ended with a little grillin' and chillin', BMTA style: next to a spring creek, with some burgers and brats on the heat and a cooler full of a wide assortment of soda pop and uh, water. That's right, H2O, you know, aqua. But we certainly did not have any beer. Because that's against the rules. And we would never, ever break the RULES.

All in all, we managed to work 1.5 miles of trail in 4.5 hours, putting in a total of 36 work hours for our eight person crew. Thanks to my Co-Leader for the day, Mark Yost, and our volunteers – David Lack, Kathleen Tokuda, Philip Guhl, Darcy Douglas, George Owen and David Blount. And, oh, by the way, in addition to making sure the inside of our trucks stayed dry, Mr. George Owen passed us all during the afternoon, working further up the trail than any of us. Thanks to you all; we couldn't do it without you.

# Georgia Work Trip



# Georgia ...November Work-Trip Announcement

**By Barry Allen**

Please join us Saturday, November 8 as we work Section 2b north from No Name Gap into Wildcat Ridge. Our plan for the day is to work selectively on sidehilling and installing water diversions, with some brush removal needed in locations. There may be a tree or two down after recent storms, but I'll check the section and put a note out to sawyers with the trip reminder. One other item needing special attention is blaze refreshing along the entire route, weather permitting.

Let's meet at the Hardee's in East Elijay at 8:00 AM sharp. If you would rather meet closer to the work site, then we'll see you at the parking area for Three Forks on FS 58 at 9:15. From Three Forks, we'll consolidate vehicles and proceed south on FS 58 to FS 251, crossing the AT and heading north back towards the BMT. Hope to see you there. We'll have a good time AND get some work done – I promise.

**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 Tom Keene (770-548-4935)**

**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 BMTA Work Trips

By Richard Harris

### BMTA TN/NC Work Trip - Section 15A Tate Gap to Unicoi Gap - Sept 25, 2014

A crew worked on logging out and brushing out this section of trail from Tate Gap (Doc Rogers Place) back to the wildlife clearing about 3/4 mile from Unicoi Gap. Six blowdowns were cleared and a brush cutter was used to get the two worst areas for briars and weeds. These spots are the old home place where the trail crosses the state line about 2 miles south of Tate Gap, and the 1/2 mile section of trail through Peel's Gap.

### BMTA TN/NC Work Trip - Section 18a - Beech Gap north - Sept 27, 2014

Five maintainers cleared 5 logs and brushed out about 1.25 miles of trail from Cold Springs Gap north toward Farr Gap.

### BMTA TN/NC Work Trip - Section 16b - near Round Top - Oct 9, 2014

The BMT just North of Round Top was brushed out on October 9th. Brushcutters were used to clear the one mile of trail before reaching the section which had already been cleared. The entire trail from Sledrunner Gap to Sandy Gap has been cleared and logged out.

### BMTA TN/NC Work Trip - Sandy Gap to Six Mile Gap- October 25

A crew logged and brushed out the BMT from Sandy Gap to Six Mile Gap, a 2 mile stretch of the BMT along the TN/NC line. The entire section is logged out and all but maybe a half mile has been brushed out. We plan a return trip to finish the brushing out in the near future. The weather was crystal clear and in the mid 70s. It was an enjoyable, though long, day.

## Did You Know ...

**By Ralph Heller and Barry Allen**

Yellow Fringed Orchid was used by Southeastern Indians (Seminoles, Creeks, etc) as a primary treatment for snakebite, applying the plant externally to the wound and drinking a tea made from the flower and roots. Even today, certain extracts from the orchid family are shown to relieve anxiety and provide a calming, heart slowing effect -- exactly what we are encouraged to do if bitten.

This flower has been seen growing in the middle of the Stanley Creek Trail. It is quite spectacular, especially for a flower growing in the woods. It is becoming rare in this area of the country.



## Upcoming Hikes

By Ralph Heller—Hiking Director

**Friday, November 7:** Gahuti Trail at Fort Mountain State Park - 8.2 miles, difficult/strenuous.

The Gahuti Trail goes around the perimeter of the park passing below the tops of both Cohutta and Fort mountains. Along the way we will see multiple overlook vistas and even cascades of a remote waterfall. This rolling trail has lots of elevation changes, but is considered difficult due to its length. There is a \$5.00 per car parking fee.



For more information, meeting time and location, contact Mike Pilvinsky, Ph: 706-273-2086h or 706-889-5254c.

## New Officers For 2014-2015

- **President:** Bob Ruby
- **Vice President:** Tom Keene
- **Secretary:** Joy Forehand
- **Treasurer:** Margaret Evans
- **GA M/C:** Barry Allen
- **TN/NC M/C:** Tracy Sheffield
- **Smokies Coord:** Dick Evans
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- **Membership/Store:** Ken Cissna
- **Publicity:** George Owen
- **Conservation:** Steve Bayliss
- **Past President:** David Blount
- **State Rep GA:** Mark Yost
- **State Rep TN/NC:** Rick Harris

## Maintainers' Awards ...BMTA Annual Conference

### Maintainer's T-Shirt ...

- Allen, Barry
- Anderson, James
- Bayliss, Conner
- Bayliss, Steve
- Blount, David
- Cartwright, Steve
- Collins, Robert
- Cook, Walt
- Danzinger, Bob
- Davis, Steve
- Douglas, Darcy
- Dumas, Larry
- Engman, Ernie
- Evans, Dick
- Forehand, Frank
- Forehand, Joy
- Guhl, Phil
- Hainge, Kim
- Hamrick, Bill
- Harris, Brenda
- Harris, Rick
- Heller, Ralph
- Hodge, Bill
- Jones, Ken
- Keene, Tom
- Kennedy, Jack
- Korean Alpine Club
- Lundin, Bill
- Mertz, Keith
- Mitchell, Tom
- Nix, Gene
- Owen, George
- Ruby, Bob
- Sheffield, Tracy
- Sloan, Bob
- Smith, Tom
- Treadwell, Gilbert
- Truppi, Keith
- Van Dyke, Larry
- Voogt, Curt
- Yost, Mark

### Maintainers' Helmets ...

- Allen, Barry
- Blount, David
- Davis, Steve
- Douglas, Darcy
- Engman, Ernie
- Evans, Dick
- Harris, Rick

# Getting The Word Out ...By Ralph Heller

62E THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2014

TIMES-COURIER • ELLIJAY, GEORGIA

## Benton MacKaye Trail connects Gilmer to Smoky Mountains

by Whitney Crouch  
wcrouch@timescourier.com

The picturesque Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) is one of the little known gems of the Southeast.

Completed in 2005, it bears the name of the man who had the original vision for the Appalachian Trail (AT) and co-founded the Wilderness

Society.

The 288-mile footpath begins atop Springer Mountain on the eastern edge of Gilmer County and follows the western branch route originally proposed by MacKaye for the AT to Davenport Gap on the northern edge of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

About 80 miles of the trail

are in Georgia — approximately 30 miles in Gilmer County and 50 miles in Fannin County.

Since the trail is still so young, however, many people do not realize that the footpath is right in their backyard.

The trail is a great place for rejuvenation and relaxation. Many sections offer comfortable and scenic day hikes, where people can expect to enjoy native wildflowers, stands of old-growth trees,

waterfalls and secluded woodland meadows.

One of the most popular sections of the BMT is on Forest Service Road 816 off Highway 60. The trail is marked by a white diamond shaped blaze. A short walk down a gradual slope will take visitors to a 260-foot long swinging bridge overlooking rapids on the Toccoa River.

Another easy hike on the BMT is in the Sisson Development off Highway 515 north of Cherry Log. This sec-

tion of trail is perfect for groups of all ages and is especially nice for families with small children. The path follows a beautiful creek, and a picnic table is provided for visitors.

The trail was built and continues to be maintained by volunteers with the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. For more information about the nonprofit organization, which offers regular group hikes and trail maintenance outings, visit [www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org).



**Mark Yost is the new State Representative for Georgia. We welcome Mark to his first BMTA Board position.**

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## Trails provide local outdoor adventures

The fall is an excellent time to hike one or more of the many trails found throughout north Georgia, including the Benton MacKaye Trail and Appalachian Trail that cross Fannin County.

The Benton MacKaye Trail, a footpath of nearly 300 miles through the Appalachian Mountains, has its southern terminus near Cherry Log.

It runs from Springer Mountain on the Fannin-Gilmer county line to Davenport Gap on the northern edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Benton MacKaye expert Ralph Heller said the trail passes through some of the most remote back country in north Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina, including eight federally designated wilderness and wilderness study areas.

There are numerous access points and trailheads along the BMT, which can create many

one-way and loop hikes on the BMT, as well as in combination with other local trails.

Heller said several hikes are planned in October and November, and visitors are welcome to participate.

He said a hike is planned to Blood Mountain and possibly another to Brush Creek at the Ocoee Whitewater Center. In

addition, Heller said there are hikes planned on various trails on Oct. 17, 18 and 19 near the BMT's annual meeting at Coker Creek.

The Benton MacKaye Trail also intersects the Appalachian Trail at several

points, creating several additional hiking loops. The AT also originates on Springer Mountain.

Access points to the BMT include Wilscot Gap on Hwy. 60, Dial Road crossing and Shallowford Bridge on Aska Road in Fannin County.

