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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:	Open
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Ralph Heller
Membership/Store:	Ken Cissna
Publicity:	Open
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 32, ISSUE 4

APRIL 25, 2015

## Margaret Drummond, BMTA Founding Member, Dies She helped create and save our trail!

**By George Owen**

One of our six Benton MacKaye Trail Association's (BMTA) founding members, Margaret Drummond, passed away April 8 at age 92. She also served much of her adult life as a top leader in the Appalachian Trail community.



Shelley Rose, former president of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), best summed Margaret up in a 2005 article: "Leader. Visionary. Forthright. Organized. Analytical. Friendly. Consensus-builder."

Margaret was born in Oklahoma but grew up in Atlanta, attending Agnes Scott College and finally earning her doctorate in biochemistry at Emory University. She taught and did research in microbiology at Emory's School of Medicine before retiring in 1988.

Dr. Drummond joined the GATC in 1961, and held several posts there before becoming its president in 1977. In 1979 she began her 26 years of service on the Appalachian Trail Conference's (now Conservancy) Board of Managers. Then in 1989 she became the conference's board chair over three two-year terms, from 1989 until 1995. Subsequently she also served awhile on the board of the American Hiking Society.

During the 1970s she was involved with the concept of the Duncan Ridge Trail for the GATC, and some of us have pictures of her cutting the ribbon with Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests Supervisor Pat Thomas at the opening of the famous 260-foot swinging bridge over the Toccoa River that is now part of the Benton MacKaye Trail.

**Continued on next page**

It was during the 1970s one night at a GATC meeting that Margaret met a young banker who happened to show up there. In her usual warm way, she spent some time with this fellow, found him very interested in learning about trails and hiking, greatly encouraged him to stay on that evening and introduced him to this writer. He and I remained after the meeting and talked for over an hour in a parking lot. That young man went on to quit his bank officer job with Citizens and Southern Bank, started hiking and working on trails, and soon acquired a job with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. It was this guy that soon was beguiling many of us with his idea for another great Southern Appalachian Mountains trail – one to follow a route the Appalachian Trail founder Benton MacKaye had once proposed from the Cohuttas in GA to the Smokies. The name of this former banker: David Sherman, “Father of the Benton MacKaye Trail”! Yes, it was Margaret Drummond who first started the chain that brought David Sherman to us – perhaps we should call her “Grandmother of the BMT.”

Margaret then went on to work with David Sherman and others of us to form the Benton MacKaye Trail Association in 1980. It is noteworthy that she much helped with this while also staying very busy then with the GATC.

The BMT was under construction in Georgia from 1980 until 1989. In the middle of this decade the trail was running into blocks from certain folks in the Forest Service about the possibility of extending the trail much beyond Georgia. The original route to the Smokies seemed very unlikely to proceed. There were also some concerns about routing the trail through the Cohutta Wilderness. So at one point it was suggested by part of the BMTA leadership to end the trail in Georgia at Watson Gap. Margaret Drummond would have none of this limitation. She called a luncheon meeting of some of us in Atlanta and insisted we resist this limitation and move on beyond Watson Gap., She was willing to put her own effort into this. Very few people in our club know this detail, but this writer feels that Margaret Drummond that day helped save the original vision for our trail to be someday completed to and through the Smokies.

This great lady who had done so much to mentor others and to help create and enhance trails had some accidents and declining health as she entered her 80s early this century. Thus she became inactive in the two trail clubs for which she had done so much. This is why so many of our more recent BMTAers have been unfamiliar with her.

So here’s to Margaret Drummond, a wondrous, wonderful, friendly, thoughtful, and inspiring lady who so many of us old-timers from the Appalachian Trail Conference to the BMTA and GATC will so greatly miss. She is unforgettable.

## Margaret Drummond Remembered

Margaret Drummond will long be remembered for her contributions to the A.T., both locally and nationally. In addition to her official “resume”, many Trail community leaders credit Margaret with significant mentoring and encouragement. During her leadership on the GATC Board (1968-1983), GATC significantly expanded its management capabilities. As she became more aware of the larger issues affecting the Trail, she engaged in volunteer management nationally, serving on the ATC Board for 26 years, including 6 years as Vice Chair for the Southern Region and 6 years as Chair of the Board. It was an exciting time when ATC’s responsibilities were increasing, and Margaret helped keep the volunteer aspect of Trail management at the forefront. She was also volunteer editor of ATC’s NC/GA guidebook for 20 years. She was instrumental in founding the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. She has received the highest honors from GATC, ATC, and the USFS. She is a GATC Friend of the Trail, an ATC Honorary Life Member, and was awarded the prestigious USFS Chief’s Award. She is a consensus builder staunch advocate of the cooperative management system that underlies the unique public-private partnership that sustains the Appalachian Trail.



**Margaret at Stover Creek Shelter, 1980's**



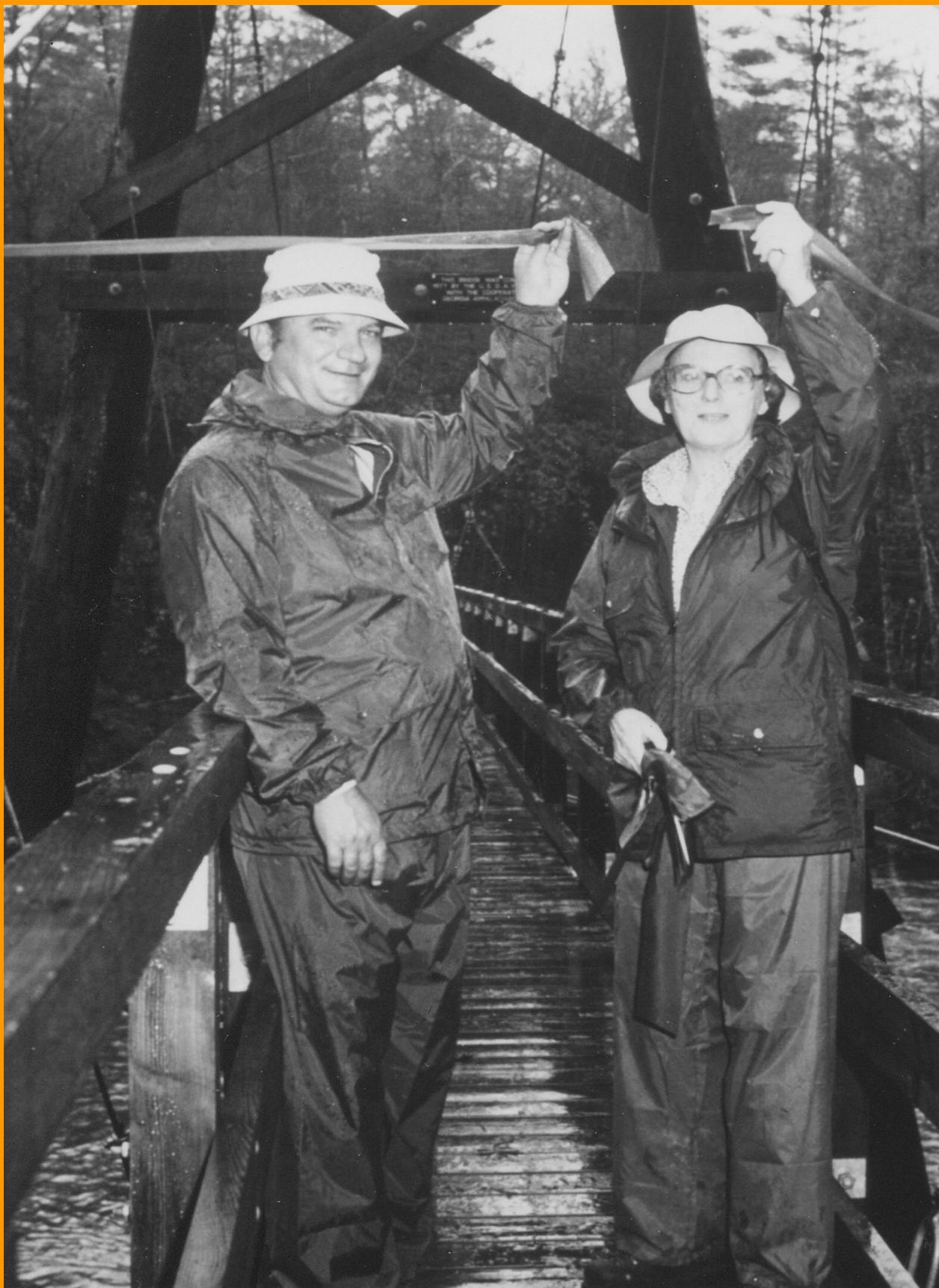
Highlands Fling honoring Octogenerians,



East Stroudsburg ATC Conference, 1989



As ATC Trail Guide Book editor for GA AT 1980's



**With C-O Forest Service Supervisor, Pat Thomas at dedication of  
bridge over Toccoa River, 1977**

## President's Column – April, 2015

### Marcia Lehman

Please join me in welcoming Marcia Lehman as BMTA Publicity Director. Marcia was elected at the April meeting of the BMTA Board of Directors. She fills the position previously held by George Owen. A couple of years ago Marcia retired from her career and moved from Norcross to Cherry Log. She has since become an active participant in the BMTA day-hike series and an enthusiastic supporter of the BMT.

Marcia brings a background in sales and marketing in the travel industry. She will be mentored in her new position by Marge Heller, who set the “gold standard” in her five years as the Publicity Director. The Publicity Director serves as BMTA's liaison to regional papers and other publications, as well as coordinating BMTA's participation in trail events. Please give Marcia your support in these activities.

Also during the last month, Ernie (SGT Rock) Engman was appointed as Chair of the BMT Thru-Hiker Committee. As publisher of the popular BMT Thru-Hikers' Guide and co-founder of the WhiteBlaze.net website, Ernie has long been BMTA's primary liaison to the long-distance hiker community. Ernie was also a key leader in the recent Yellow Creek Mountain Trail and Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock reroutes.

Reflecting on Marcia's replacing of George and on the passing of Margaret Drummond, I am reminded of the need for BMTA to continually replenish its volunteers and leaders. As we celebrate BMTA's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are into our second or third generation of leaders. New members and leaders provide the fresh blood and energy needed to keep BMTA vital and to maintain the BMT as the superb hiking trail that it is today.



## Upcoming Hikes ... by Ralph Heller-Hiking Director

### **Friday May 1 – Lady Slipper Hike**

**Length:** 6.2 miles –moderate/difficult hike

**Hike Description:** this hike starts at the Fall Branch Falls trail head and finishes at the trail head at Weaver Creek Road. The first half is mostly uphill and the last half is downhill. This time of year there should be a large lady slipper display for several miles on the last half of the hike. Also there should be many wild azaleas in bloom. The hike leader may decide to start the hike at Stanley Gap which will make the hike a little shorter with less uphill climb. Bring lots of water and lunch.

For more information on this hike and to register to get meeting time and location, contact Hike leader Joy Forehand jwfbgrg AT [gmail.com](mailto:jwfbgrg@gmail.com) or call (706)946-0336.

### **Wednesday May 13 – Hike to Toccoa River Suspension Bridge**

**Length:** 3.5 miles with car shuttle – easy/moderate

**Hike Description:** Hike from GA Highway 60 over Tooni Mountain to 260 ft. pedestrian suspension bridge crossed by the BMT.

For more information on this hike and to register to get meeting time and location, contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna kcissna AT [usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or call (706)636-1741.

### **Saturday June 6 – National Trails Day Celebration**

**In Georgia:** Meet with BMTA, GATC and Mountain High Hikers at Pavilion 2 at Vogel State Park for morning trail maintenance or hikes – your choice, and then potluck picnic for lunch. For more information contact Ralph Heller phone 770-235-9760

**In Tennessee/North Carolina:**

Three hikes planned – meet in Tellico Plains Town Square at 9 am.

Trail maintenance at Towee Creek – meet at Quinn Springs Campground shelter at 9am.

Campground is on highway 30 west of Reliance.

For more information, contact Rick Harris harrisri AT [aol.com](mailto:harrisri@aol.com) or phone (423)253-6358.

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## Upcoming Hikes ... by Ralph Heller-Hiking Director

### Friday June 12 – Easy Trek Hike to Turtletown Falls

**Length:** Approx. 4 miles – moderate/easy

**Elevation Gain:** About 500 ft. from the second falls back to the parking lot

**Hike Description:** On this loop hike, you get two waterfalls for the price of one hike. The first mile is an easy walk on an old road bed along Turtletown Creek. Then, leaving the road bed, there is a steep descent using switchbacks to get down to the base of the first falls. These falls drop about 25 ft. and are divided at the top by a protruding section of rock. The hike down to the second falls is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile easy walk on a gently sloping grade. At the second falls we will eat lunch. After lunch the hike back follows the old road bed up Shinbone Ridge which overlooks the Hiawassee River below. Bring plenty of water.

For more information on this hike and to register in order to get meeting time and location contact Hike Leader Sara Bland jsbland AT [windstream.net](mailto:jsbland@windstream.net) or call (678)493-2649.

**Saturday July 18** Section 11e from FS221 to Thunder Rock Campground then on to Ocoee Whitewater Center via Rhododendron Trail.

**Length:** Section 11e 3.4 miles - easy downhill, Rhododendron Trail 1.6 miles easy level walk along the Ocoee River

**Hike Description:** This Easy Trek hike starts at the intersection of FS 221 and the BMTA, the beginning of BMT Section 11e going north. It is a nice easy downhill to the Ocoee River. The hike then follows the river upstream to the Whitewater Center with good views of the river and rafters negotiating the rapids. There are picnic tables along the river for lunch. Hike leader to be determined.

In the meantime, for information on this hike contact Ralph Heller at 770-235-9760.

Is there interest in doing a hike to Dukes Creek and Raven Cliff Falls? It is a bit of a drive going past Helen, GA from the Ellijay area, and is on two different trails but they are near each other. The Dukes Creek Trail is 2.2 miles round trip and the Raven Cliff hike is 5 miles round trip. Afterwards, we could stop in Helen for something to eat. Let me know - 770-235-9760

**Note:** On most of our hikes we carpool to the site. Once we get there, we often do a shuttle from the end of the hike back to the starting point. A nice gesture to the drivers would be for folks riding to help chip in for gas.

## GRASSY MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER, SONGBIRD & CONASAUGA LAKE LOOP TRAILS, APRIL 17, 2014

**Story by Mike Pilvinsky, Photos by Walter Polk**

During a 6 hour break in the spring monsoon, a convoy of 21 happy hikers headed toward Lake Conasauga on the edge of the Cohutta Wilderness. Upon arrival, they split into two groups. The easy trekkers, led by Jerry & Sara Bland, explored the Songbird Trail and the Conasauga Lake Loop Trail for a 3 1/2 mile hike in the misty morning. The long hikers journey took them into the clouds to the top of Grassy Mountain. Coming back down the mountain, the long hikers then completed their hike by following the Songbird and Lake trails until arriving at the lake pavilion where the easy trekkers had laid out a fantastic pot luck meal and BBQ. After eating too much as one usually does at a pot luck, we returned to civilization. Even though the weather was not perfect, we were all grateful to get outside for the first time in what seemed like ages. Many thanks to Marcia and Ann for coordinating the pot luck. What a great way to end a hike. It was truly a fun day, and it resulted in 3 new BMTA members. In addition, there were several first time hikers who vowed to return in the future. Walter Polk's daughter from Galveston Texas joined us for her first North Georgia hike. Bob Sicignano returned as a new member after wintering in Sarasota and Sue Ford and her husband also joined us for their first BMTA experience. All in all it was a great day and worthwhile repeating next spring.



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# GRASSY MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER, SONGBIRD & CONASAUGA LAKE LOOP TRAILS, APRIL 17, 2014



# John Muir Clean-Up Hike for BMT section 13b Childers Creek to Big Bend

April 11, 2015 ... Submitted by Deborah Flower

It was a gorgeous day as nine members of the Cherokee Hiking Club cleaned up the three mile "Adopt a Trail" section of the John Muir Trail / BMT along the Hiwassee River. The trail was clipped and snipped. Rick Harris made quick use of his chain saw and cleared the trail of several massive blow-downs. We saw many wildflowers including yellow trilliums, fire pinks, native mountain laurel, Indian corn flowers, violets, flox and may-apples. There was very little trash and sticks and brush were removed from the trail.

Hike Leaders: Deborah Flower and Clayton Pannell. Hikers: (l-r) Rebecca Levings, Rick Harris, Deborah Flower, Dave Flower, Carol Guhne, Kathy Seymour with canine hiker, Holly Blue, Clayton Pannell, Letha Kelly and daughter, Tina.



## Corporate Member ... North Georgia Mountain Outfitters

On April 7, 2015, North Georgia Mountain Outfitters celebrated their new location, at 14244 Highway 515 N., Ellijay GA., with a ribbon cutting supplied by the Gilmer Chamber of Commerce.

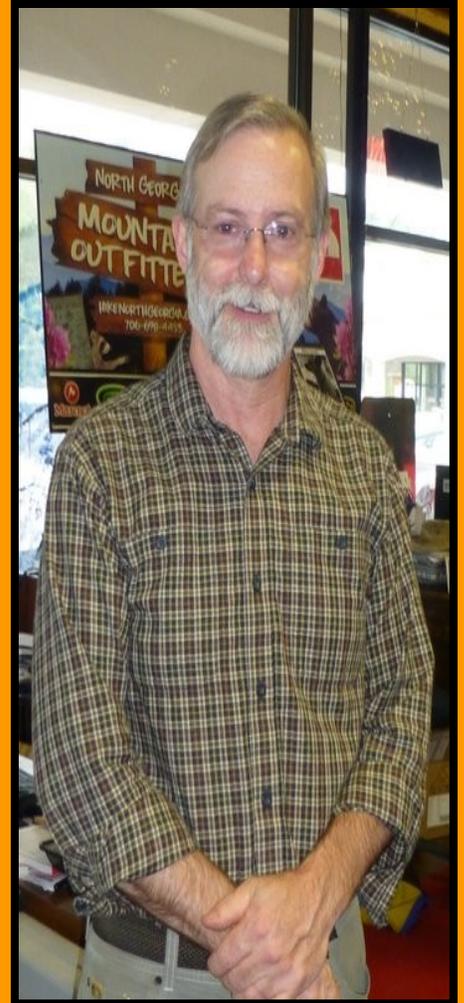
The new 3,500 square foot store has great visibility for folks passing by on this gateway to the mountains. Travis and Shirley stock top lines of products for backpackers and hikers such as North Face and Patagonia and a large selection of packs, tents, sleeping bags and hammocks. The expanded store has a large selection of hiking shoes and boots complete with expert advice on getting a proper fit. All the BMT guidebooks are stocked, as well as National Geographic maps of the area which show the track of the BMT.

Travis and Shirley both are avid hikers when they have time away from their store. Travis has almost finished hiking the Appalachian Trail. They both are a wealth of information on area trails and proper equipment for a pleasant outdoor experience. If you have a chance, stop by and check out their new location.



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# Corporate Member ... North Georgia Mountain Outfitters



## May 2 - BMTA TN/NC Work Trip on Sycamore Creek Section

**May 2 - BMTA TN/NC Work Trip on Sycamore Creek Section** - The usual 4th Saturday of the month work trip has been moved to May 2 due to conflicts with most of our sawyers for the usual date. So, come on out and join us for a day in the woods along a beautiful creek on Saturday, May 2. We will be logging out this 6 mile section from end to end, coming in from both ends. And there are lots of hemlock branches to clear off the trail with all the hemlocks succumbing to the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. We will have lots of lopping and swingblading to do as well from last falls growth and the new growth this spring. Meet behind the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 9 AM ready to go with your long pants, sturdy boots, helmet, eye protection and gloves with lots of water and a lunch. We can provide personal protective equipment (helmet, gloves, eye protection) for those who lack this.

Call or email me in advance, please so we have an idea of how many to expect. [HarrisRi@aol.com](mailto:HarrisRi@aol.com) or 423-253-6358.

## BMTA /CHC Day Hike to Bob Bald

**March 21**

**Leader: Brenda Harris**

Eleven day hikers and one golden retriever dog Jake Harris hiked from the Unicoi Crest Overlook at the Cherohala Skyway to Bob Bald on this pretty and sunny spring day. Hikers were from the BMTA and the Cherokee Hiking Club and a few other guests. The trail took us along the Benton MacKaye Trail north from Beech Gap along the old forest service road to Cold Springs Gap, then up the Bob Bald Access Trail to Bob Bald at mile 3.75 with a steep 900 foot climb. After reaching the Bob, we all stretched out on the grass, ate lunch and rested. As we were finishing up, the BMTA/CHC backpacking group arrived which was headed to the Hangover and Tapoco Lodge. We socialized with them, then returned to the Skyway and headed home.

Attendees included: Brenda Harris (hike leader), Jake Harris (golden retriever), Darrin, Alecia, and Daniel Hunt, Bev and Greg Benzon, Laura Tomlinson, Becky Levings, Evette Strickland, Pam Crays, Barb Lewinski, and Russ Jones.



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# BMTA /CHC Day Hike to Bob Bald



# CHC / BMTA Backpack on BMT Slickrock Reroute

**March 21-22**

**Richard Harris, leader**

Eleven backpackers traversed the new Slickrock Reroute of the Benton MacKaye Trail on this warm and sunny weekend - well, mostly sunny weekend. We started our trip at the Unicoi Crest Overlook on the Cherohala Skyway, just past the TN-NC state line. We hiked north to Cold Springs Gap on the old forest service road, then we took the Bob Bald Access Trail for about a mile to the intersection with the Stratton Ridge Trail and from there up to Bob Bald after 3.75 miles and 900 feet of ascent. We ran into Tipi Walker as he was finishing up his 22 day backpack in the area and had a good toke with him. We made several brief stops to rest and to have introductions of each person, giving his or her background to the others. We also discussed various historical aspects of the trail area, such as the Stratton homestead, the Kirkland Bushwackers, the origin of balds, the spruce trees at the bald, and the slide on the Cherohala Skyway.

At the Bob, we met the day hikers and joined them for lunch and the pretty views of the surrounding mountains. The day hikers then left to return to the Unicoi Crest Overlook. We continued on toward Naked Ground, where we rested and discussed the history of logging in the area and the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. From there, we continued on up to Haeo and the Hangover with its 360 degree views of the Smokies and other mountains, valleys and lakes. We set up our camp near the Hangover, obtained water from the nearby spring, ate supper, then spent some time out on the Hangover itself till bedtime. The trail overall the first day was in pretty good shape with only a few blowdowns and minimal brush, thanks to SAWS work trips this past year.



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## CHC / BMTA Backpack on BMT Slickrock Reroute

On Sunday after breaking our camp, we headed down the Hang-over Lead Trail toward Big Fat Gap. The first mile was steep and very difficult to traverse. This section definitely needs some help in the future with fresh sidehilling and possibly some short reroutes. The remainder of the trail to the gap was not too bad except for some very steep sections, especially near the gap. At the gap, two of our backpackers decided to finish the trip by hiking down the road, due to fatigue and knee/back problems. The rest of us continued on, getting water a short way down the Windy Gap Trail, then taking the very steep descent to the junction with the Nichols Cove Trail. We turned right and hiked through the cove with evidence of old homesteads and gravesites. There is not a distinct trail through here with several alternative routes. We will need to some way establish a clear single route. We then intersected with the Yellowhammer Gap Trail, which looks fairly flat on the map, but is quite difficult due to the very frequent steep ups and downs and stream crossings. Much sidehilling and several blowdowns need removing on this section. When we reached Yellowhammer Gap, we then took the recently reopened Tapoco Lodge Trail down to the lodge and our cars which we left there. It started to sprinkle on us as we headed down to the lodge. This 1.6 mile trail will need much sidehilling in the middle part, but the upper and lower parts are in good shape. At the lodge we all went to the grill underneath the main building for beer, iced tea, burgers, pizza and ice cream, keeping out of the serious rain which began to fall. We all left the lodge around 5 PM to complete our shuttle and head home. This reroute, once fixed up and signed, will be a great new stretch of the BMT.



## CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS CHATTAHOOCHEE-OCONEE NATIONAL FORESTS

### CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS

Please join us and our many valued partners as we welcome Tony Tooke, our new Regional Forester!

Wednesday, April 8, 2015 | 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.  
Union County Community Center  
129 Union County Recreation Rd., Blairsville 30512

Low Country Boil - \$13/person, Cash Bar  
*(cash or check only, pay at the door)*

RSVP requested by April 1 to [jrtoppins@fs.fed.us](mailto:jrtoppins@fs.fed.us)



## CHATTAHOOCHEE-OCONEE NATIONAL FORESTS

# Trout Unlimited Volunteers ... Thank you

Enjoy the photos of Trout Unlimited Volunteers helping the BMTA at Fall Branch.

Photos are courtesy of Allen Sacks. He managed to make the work look just as hard as it was ... but everyone is still smiling! Thank you friends!



**Celebrate National Trails Day 2015!**  
**Where: Vogel State Park, Pavilion #2**  
**When: June 6, 2015**

Join in the fun at Vogel State Park for the annual celebration of National Trails Day! Activities will include trail work in Georgia's favorite state park and on USFS land nearby, family friendly hikes, an invasive plant eradication project, a covered dish luncheon, and a brief program. Members of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA), Mountain High Hikers (MHH), and Georgia Forest Watch (GFW) will join forces to host this event. National Trails Day was started in 1993 by the National Hiking Society as an annual event to emphasize the importance of the National Trails System and to encourage trail use, stewardship, and outdoor recreation.

### Schedule of Events

9:00 – 12:00 Trail work on the Bear Hair Trail

- Co-Leaders: Lawson Herron and Marion McLean – GATC

9:00 – 12:00 Invasive Plant Eradication

- Leader: Laura Northrup – GATC

9:00 – 12:00 Family Friendly Hikes (open to the public)

- Co-Leaders: Darcy Douglas and Ken Cissna – BMTA

12:00 – 1:30 Covered Dish Luncheon with program during lunch

- Co-Leaders: Nancy Lovingood and Kathy Chastain – GATC, Candy Retter - MHH

### Luncheon Program:

- Welcoming Remarks (brief)
- Welcome to Vogel: Cliff Tippens – Vogel State Park Manager
- USFS: Andy Baker, District Ranger, BRRD
- GATC: Beth Rothermel, President
- BMTA: Bob Ruby, President
- MHH: Michael O'Brien, President
- SEFTC: Darcy Douglas, President
- GFW: TBA
- Presentation – Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) Charlie Smillie – SAWS Field Supervisor

1:30 – 3:00 Club-specific meetings as needed

- GATC Prospective Member Orientation

1:30 – until Enjoy the lake, go fishing, go hiking, visit with hiking pals!

Please come prepared for your activity of choice. Bring work gloves, sturdy shoes or boots, water, snack, etc ..... Plan ahead to keep hot food hot and cold food cold, for safety prior to the meal. Bring a folding chair or two as seating may be limited during the luncheon.

# Membership Report

## Benton MacKaye Trail Association

### Membership Report

April 15, 2015

	<u>Dec 2013</u>	<u>April 2014</u>	<u>July 2014</u>	<u>Oct 2014</u>	<u>Jan 2015</u>	<u>April 2015</u>
Life	53	54	54	54	53	53
Individual	112	86	96	102	109	129
Family	80	55	65	70	74	82
Senior/Student	41	37	40	41	49	51
Corporate	4	5	6	6	7	7
Total Memberships	290	237	261	273	292	322
Less 88 Non-Renewers						234
Total Members **	370	292	326	343	366	404

### Memberships by Year (Year-End Unless Otherwise Indicated)

2006	226*
2007	250*
2008	232*
2009	206*
2010	275*
2011	265*
2012	269*
2013	290
2014	292

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\* Month of Report Not Known.

\*\*Estimated based on doubling the number of Family members.

**Kenneth Cissna**