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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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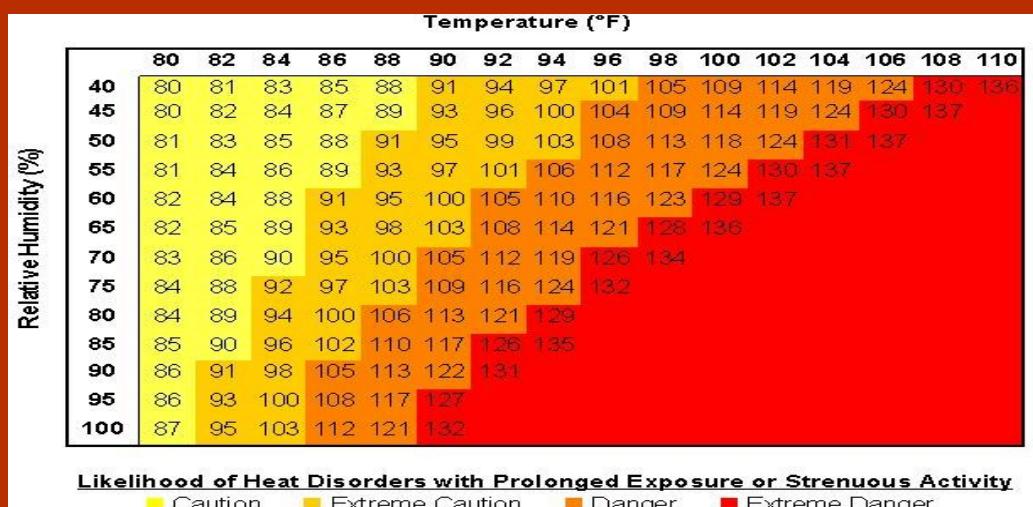
JUNE 2015

BMTA President's Column June 2015

Hot Weather Hiking and Maintaining

Wow, it's getting hot, and summer has just begun! I spent this morning cleaning trash on the bank of the Chattahoochee River and could feel the oppressive heat. I think it's appropriate to share a few reminders about dealing with high temperatures during outdoor activity, not that this will all be new to most of you but we do have new and inexperienced hikers out on the BMT everyday.

Heat generally becomes a real danger when the temperature is over 90° and the relative humidity is over 70%. This makes the Heat Index 105°. You can see a chart from NOAA showing the Caution, Extreme Caution, Danger and Extreme Danger zones by Googling "heat index chart." The Caution range starts at 80° with moderate humidity.



Heat problems can manifest in three stages: **dehydration, heat exhaustion** and **heat stroke**. The first two require rest, rehydration and cooling the body. **Heat stroke is life threatening** and should result in immediately calling 911 or other emergency communications (if available) and immediate, aggressive cooling of the elevated body temperature with cool water. Hydration by mouth may not be possible until conscious. The symptoms of impending heat stroke include: cramping, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, hallucinations, seizures, elevated heart and respiration rates, and hot/dry skin with lack of sweating.

Continued on next page

Rapidly evacuate any patient with an altered mental status.

Avoiding these problems is **key**, and hiking alone is especially risky in high heat as the sufferer is likely to be unable to treat oneself.

There are several ways to avoid heat problems:

- Choose a shorter distance, slower pace and/or shorter work schedule than you would during the cooler months. Build these up slowly, acclimating yourself to the heat over a week or two.
- Pick trails with higher elevations and lots of water and shade.
- Check the weather forecast before you go for both heat and storms.
- Start early in the morning and/or hike in the evening. Rest during the hottest part of the day.
- Cover up and wear loose/light/wicking clothes. Use sunscreen on exposed areas.
- Hydrate frequently. I try to carry 2-3 liters of water for a day's hiking or work. I like to add a little Gatorade-type powder for improved taste and electrolyte replenishment. Icing your water before departure makes it more effective. It's also important to know where the reliable water sources are on the trail and to bring water treatment equipment, so you can resupply. Make sure everyone in your party has adequate water and is properly equipped.
- Bring and eat food for energy and to maintain the chemical balance in your body. Lightly salted items are recommended.
- Rest frequently. You are more likely to suffer all kinds of trail injuries if you are worn down by the heat. On a hot day, I like to stop at streams to dip my hat and soak my shirt in the water. That evaporation really makes a big difference in keeping cool.

There are other hazards keep in mind during hot weather:

- Insects are more pervasive and aggressive: yellow-jackets and bees (carry an EpiPen if you are allergic), ticks, chiggers, mosquitoes, etc,
- Snakes are more active, including copperheads and rattlesnakes, so stay alert.
- Poison ivy and poison oak grow profusely along the trail. Dress appropriately, and bring ivy block and TechNu if you are sensitive. Check with the leader if you are on a BMTA group trip.

I've made hot weather hiking and trail work sound like something to avoid. Some of my friends skip hiking in the southern summers and enjoy the beach or lake. Others travel to cooler climates to hike. Many of us keep going through the summer months but at an easier pace and choosing cooler days. It's up to you, but if/when you go keep these commonsense precautions in mind.

BMT Walk-Thru – July 11

In spite of the above cautions, I hope many of you will participate in our **BMT Walk-Thru on July 11**. This is an annual event where we try to get a comprehensive assessment of the trail's condition so we can plan maintenance activity to remediate any problem sections. There is further information in the maintainer sections of this newsletter. Pick a reasonable section for you to walk, considering the conditions, and use commonsense.

See you on the trail!

Bob

Annual Walk Thru Saturday July 11 Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina

BMTA Members and Friends

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

It is time to do our annual snapshot of the trail by doing a thru-walk of the trail in a single day. This year our Walk Thru date is:

Saturday, July 11 for Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina

Wow! That will be an impressive accomplishment! **200 miles in a day.** Even if you are not able to walk a section, you can help and get in on the fun by serving as a shuttle driver for those who do walk.

What Is It?

Once each year, the BMTA members hike and report on trail conditions. We cover all 200 miles south of the Smokies. The information gathered on problem trail conditions is collected by Maintenance Directors. It is used to determine future work-trips, and is relayed to section maintainers so that repairs can be made. It's a vital audit of trail conditions. It's also a rewarding way to enjoy a hike in the woods on the BMT.

To Participate

The BMTA welcomes all to take part in the Annual Walk-Thru. If you'd like to help but prefer not to hike, car shuttles are needed and this is a great way to contribute. Shuttle drivers free up the hikers so that more trail can be covered. This valuable service is much appreciated. Please contact a Maintenance Director (see below) to volunteer.

For hikers, we ask that you hike in pairs. One person from each party is asked to download and review an Annual Walk-Thru Report Form, <http://www.bmta.org/AnnualWalk-Thru.php> fill it out, and return it via either email to walk-thru@bmta.org or US mail to POBox 6, Cherry Log, GA 30522 within one week of completing the walk thru.

Thank you for helping us gather this important information on trail conditions.
Questions? For Georgia sections, contact Barry Allen at 770-294-7384; for North Carolina and Tennessee, contact Rick Harris at 423-253-6358. Either can be reached via email to walk-thru@bmta.org. Please direct questions by name.
Thanks to all!!

American Hiking Society Update

Senate appropriators passed the Interior bill through full committee on a party line vote yesterday after much back-and-forth over funding levels and riders. The bill will move to the floor of the Senate at an unspecified later date.

The FY2016 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill provides a total of \$31.06 billion, including \$30.01 billion in discretionary funding and \$1.05 billion in emergency firefighting funds.

Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) took a hit compared to last year's enacted funding level, the committee appropriators funding it at \$292 million which is \$14 million less than FY2015. Considering that the senate majority switched in the last election, however, it still reflects that there is much support for this program that is vital to completing so many trails. It also continues the trend, regardless of who is the majority party, of the Senate recommending much higher investment in LWCF than the House.

In LWCF action, Sen. Tester (D-MT) introduced an amendment that would have increased funding to \$380 million if Congress addressed the sequester budget caps, but the amendment was defeated. However, an amendment offered by Sen. Collins (R-ME) increased the originally proposed funding level by \$14 million with offsets from other areas of the bill.

While the bill currently funds LWCF at \$292 million, more of those funds are directed to the Forest Legacy Program (\$60 million) and Stateside grants (\$55 million) and less money towards federal land acquisitions.

Highly contentious policy riders were included and fought by all the Democrats while the Republicans were unanimous in backing all but one of them. Referred to as "poison pill" riders by the Dems, they included riders that would affect climate change, clean water, hydraulic fracturing on BLM lands, and the sage grouse issue, among other things.

In other Senate Interior appropriations bill news, the bill funds **wildfire suppression** at 100% of the 10 year average as well as providing access to additional funds if the costs of suppression exceed that level of funding. While AHS still strongly advocates for passage of the **Wildfire Disaster Funding Act** ([H.R. 167](#) & [S. 235](#)), this is a big win as it will help the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service to stop borrowing from other programs (such as trails maintenance and construction) to address the increasing costs of wildfires in recent years.

American Hiking Society has been actively advocating on these issues as have many of our Alliance members and other trails organizations. I thank all of our Alliance members, individual members, and others who have responded to calls to action and contacted your senators when requested. While we would of course like to see (and will continue to work to effect) increased LWCF funding, just getting to this level is a small victory and would not have happened without the support of so many people and organizations.

But our work is nowhere near complete. The Senate and House have far to go to actually finalize their budgets and agree on a final budget. This process, as most of you are aware, can stretch out clear into the next fiscal year that they are funding. In the interim, there will be many chances for advocates to speak up and help ensure that land management agencies have the resources required to protect the trails and lands that are so important to us and to the American people.

Peter Olsen
Vice President for Programs and Government Relations

New Hope for Saving Hemlocks

By Ralph Heller

Save Georgia's Hemlocks Annual Hemlock Camp Meeting on June 7 introduced very hopeful news about a beetle native to the Pacific Northwest, which could be the answer to help save our Eastern Hemlocks. Most BMTA folks are aware of the destruction of these trees by a tiny exotic insect, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), introduced to the eastern US in the early 50's from Asia. The devastation can be seen just about everywhere these trees are growing in the North Georgia Mountains.

Dr. Richard McDonald, the keynote speaker at the meeting, introduced the audience to information about this predatory beetle called *Laricobius nigrinus* or **Lari**. In the past, it was thought that there was no native predatory insect species in the US that would control the adelgid outbreak. There have been efforts to raise and release several predatory insects native to Asia, but collecting these insects and raising them in labs has been extremely expensive. Their effectiveness and reproduction when released in the wild has been less than what was hoped for.

In contrast, Dr. McDonald's research found that the existence of the *Laricobius nigrinus* beetles in the Pacific Northwest appeared to be at least partially responsible for the healthy Western Hemlocks in that area of the country, even though Hemlock Woolly Adelgids have existed therefor a very long time. He also noted that Eastern Hemlocks planted in parks in Seattle were healthy in spite of the presence of HWA. These beetles only eat adelgids. Based on these observations, he developed a procedure for collecting these insects and has released them to an area around Boone, NC. This procedure has not been inexpensive, but is a lot less expensive than lab raised Asian beetles. Also, it has been documented that they breed and spread once introduced. Dr. McDonald reports that, " Releases since 2003 and natural dispersion have established the *L. nigrinus* beetle in a 5,000 mile radius area; roughly 40 mile in every direction from Grandfather Mountain and spreading 2+ miles on all fronts each year. " Most hemlock adelgid predatory beetles are summer feeders, but Lari is a winter feeder and the adults and their larvae feed on adelgids from October to May. An adult according to Dr. McDonald can eat 6 or more adelgids a day before laying 200-400 eggs in the adelgids protective egg sacs. Additionally each larva growing in the egg sac can consume 200-250 adelgid eggs or crawlers. In the Pacific Northwest Lari beetles reportedly eat about 97% of winter production of adelgids. Dr. McDonald also identified a summer feeding adelgid predator from the Pacific Northwest called *Scymnus coniferarum*. This is a small gold and black ladybug that feeds specifically on adelgids.

Hopefully, the introduction of these two species of predatory insects, along with other efforts to control the populations of Hemlock Woolly adelgids will result in the long term solution for saving these majestic and ecologically valuable trees in our forests. For information on the hemlock problem in Georgia go to www.savegeorgiahemlocks.org on the web. There is also much information about *Laricobius nigrinus* and *Scymnus coniferarum* with a search of the web.

Ralph and Marge Heller and Marcia Lehman attended the Hemlock Camp Meeting as representatives of the BMTA. Marcia, our new Publicity Director, set up and attended the BMTA display for the meeting.

National Trails Day at Vogel State Park

Submitted by Bob Ruby, based on an article written for the GATC Mountaineer by Dayton Miller

On June 6, 2015, a group of 87 outdoor enthusiasts came together under beautiful clear skies at Vogel State Park for work, hiking, food, and fellowship in celebration of National Trails Day (NTD) 2015. Participants included representatives from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA), Mountain High Hikers (MHH), Georgia Forest Watch (GAFW), Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC), Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), and North Georgia Trail Runners. Activities included work on the Bear Hair Trail clearing blowdowns and improving drainage, an invasive plant removal project, hiking, and a wonderful potluck luncheon.

The group was welcomed by Vogel's Assistant Park Manager Jennifer Jones and provided with inspirational remarks by Blue Ridge District Ranger, Andy Baker, of the U.S. Forest Service. Brief presentations were made by the presidents or representatives of all of the participating organizations.



George Owen was the highlight of the luncheon with his heartfelt and moving tribute to Margaret Drummond

Special thanks to Lawson Herron and Marion McClean ([GATC](#)) for leading the work trip, David and Pat Stelts and Laura Northrup ([GATC](#)) for leading the invasive plant project, Darcy Douglas and George Owen ([BMTA/GATC/SEFTC/MHH](#)) for leading the hike, and Nancy Lovingood, Kathy Chastain ([GATC](#)), and Candy Retter ([MHH/GATC](#)) for organizing the luncheon. Extra Special Thanks to Dayton Miller ([BMTA/GATC/SEFTC/MHH](#)) for organizing NTD at Vogel and to Wayne Jolley and Jennifer Eckert from Cabin Coffee of Blairsville for providing complimentary liquid motivation for all participants! The day closed with remarks by Charlie Smillie of SAWS



Tellico Plains Trail Town Event June 7, 2015

by Richard Harris

Tellico Plains, "The Little Town with the Big Backyard", celebrated its first anniversary as a BMTA/Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition Trail Town on National Trails Day, June 7, 2015, with three hikes and work trips on the BMT and other nearby trails. Hikers met at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center for the three hikes offered, which included a 9 mile hike in the Bald River Gorge, led by BMTA member Brenda Harris. Laura Hodge, of TN Wild and wife of Bill Hodge of SAWS (Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards), led a very popular hike on the Unicoi Turnpike National Historic Trail.



Smiling Hikers at Unicoi



Unicoi Entertainment

Photos courtesy Laura Hodge

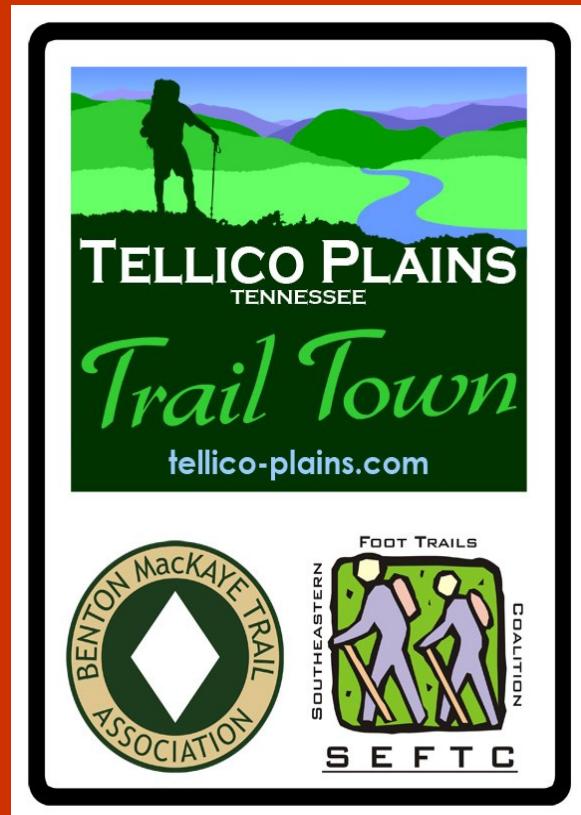
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Jon Faraone, a local Presbyterian minister, lead a hike to the 80 foot Falls Branch Falls off the Cherohala Skyway. Overall about 40 hikers enjoyed the forests and streams of Southeast TN.

The 29 trail workers met at Quinn Springs Campground along the Hiwassee River to break into 5 crews. Three crews worked on the John Muir Trail section of the BMT between the Childers Creek and Towee Creek Trailheads, and the other two crews worked on the Fisherman's Trail and the Gee Creek Trail.



Both the hikers and trail workers enjoyed a breakfast provided by Tellico Grains and a hearty supper after the hikes and work trips. For the hikers, Jim DeBernardi (Tellico Outpost) and Jim Sirmans provided a variety of sandwiches and pizzas, and for the trail workers, Joanne and Bobby Mitchell of the Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen provided hotdogs and a great stew. TN Wild covered the costs of the trail workers supper.



The trail workers received a free trail town t-shirt, and the hikers purchased their t-shirts for \$5 each.

Upcoming Tellico Plains Trail Town events include their participation in the Tellico Wild event scheduled for July 31-Aug 2, and another day of hikes and work trips on National Public Lands Day, September 26. Tellico Wild, an event primarily sponsored by TN Wild, will include hikes, snorkeling in Citico Creek, paddle boarding on the lake at Indian Boundary, and various special presentations and seminars. Information can be found on the TN Wild meetup page.

Congratulations Tellico Plains on celebrating one year as a BMTA/Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition Trail Town!!

Trek to Turtletown Falls, Farner, TN June 12

by Sara R. Bland

On Friday, June 12, twenty-five awesome hikers greeted the summer with a 3.5 mile trek at beautiful Turtletown Falls in Farner, Tennessee. Two enthusiastic groups were formed. One was led by Sara Bland and the other by our hiking director, Ralph Heller.



Before we departed the Home Depot Parking Lot in Blue Ridge, Jerry Bland distributed printed information on the subject of forest bathing or Shinrin Yoku. In addition to the obvious benefits of experiencing the forest, e.g. exercise, socialization, and maintenance for future generations, it is an added blessing to know that it may have a an additional positive impact on our health. The Forest Agency of Japan has been conducting studies since 1982 and we think their findings are meaningful to our well-being. Researchers believe the phytoncides or essential oils from the trees, produce natural killer cells that improve blood pressure, pulse rate, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, boost the immune system, and decrease cortisol (and more!). There is an abundance of information on these studies if you are so inclined to learn more about them.

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Now back to our hike...The abundant rainfall of the preceding days provided two thunderous waterfalls and a rushing creek for all to hear, see, and even smell.



The second waterfall was the site for lunch and a "little" socializing before we trekked on. By then, the heat had increased a few degrees but was ameliorated by nature's canopy and the breeze from the creek. Once again we are thankful to Walter Polk who captured the memories of the day with his camera.

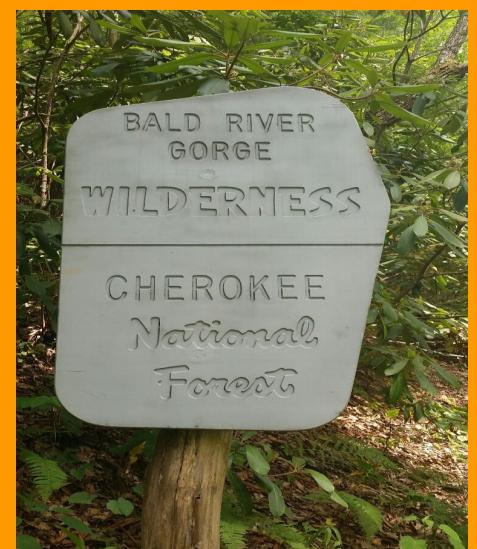
We were pleased to have several new BMTA hikers and especially grateful to those who joined in membership with the BMTA "family". This group was living right because just as most of us opened our car doors to depart the trailhead, the heavens opened full-blast! Once again, our expectations for a great hiking day were fulfilled.

Many blessing and miracles to all on the trail of life AND don't forget to read about forest bathing!

Sara R. Bland

Bald River Falls National Trails Day Hike

photos courtesy Brenda Tharris



Maintainers Corner

by Tom Keene

NOW IS THE TIME!! SUMMER VEGETATION MUST DIE!!

We've had a rainy spring and now it has turned hot and humid. The trailside vegetation is getting out of hand. It's time to get out the pruners, folding saws, loppers and swingblades and go to work.

I prefer to make a first sweep of my section carrying only my HAND PRUNERS and FOLDING SAW saw in a holster. That way I have both hands free and never have to set a tool down and go back for it after working a stretch. Cut the intrusive rhododendron and tree branches back to get as close to BMT



specs as I can - that's a path clear eight-feet high, four feet wide. During that first sweep I make note of areas that will need LOPPERS for heavier cutting or SWINGBLADE work to clear brambles, green briars and their friends close to the ground. Bear in mind that if the briars and brambles get really nasty, a FIRE RAKE is a great weapon. You can only cut swinging one direction, but with the long handle and those triangular blades you can wear out some really nasty stuff without getting all chewed up by the thornes and poison ivy yourself.

FORK IT; DON'T STUB IT One trick I learned early on from Walt Cook, our mentor in most maintenance matters, is that there is right way to prune back branches. Don't simply cut in the middle of an offending branch. If you do, you will leave an ugly stub-end facing the trail. Keep doing that over the years and your section will become lined with a mass of such stub ends. Not exactly Leave no Trace! Instead, follow the offending branch back to where it forks off another branch, or all the way back to the trunk, and make your cut there. There will be no stub-end. Your cut will be practically invisible and the tree will retain its natural graceful line



WORK SAFELY

SERIOUS SHOES with good traction, good WORK GLOVES and LONG PANTS are all a must for trail vegetation clearance. I mostly wear a long sleeve shirt as well to protect against poison ivy. If you can't stand the thought of long sleeves in the southern summer try IVY BLOCK. It's available at many pharmacies and outdoors shops. Put it on your wrists and arms like sunscreen. It works well for me and most people who have tried it. Take PLENTY OF WATER and drink BEFORE YOU GET THIRSTY. You do not want to get dehydrated while carrying sharp tools a long way from home.

** THANKS MAINTAINERS, for all you do, year round, to keep the BMT a trail to be proud of.

Upcoming Hikes

by Ralph Heller-Hiking Director

Saturday July 11 Annual Walk Thru

Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina

Georgia contact: Barry Allen at 770-294-7384

North Carolina/Tennessee contact: Rick Harris at 423-253-6358

Email walk-thru@bmta.org

Saturday July 11 Annual Walk Thru- Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina ; Georgia contact Barry Allen at 770-294-7384; North Carolina/Tennessee contact Rick Harris at 423-253-6358. Email walk-thru@bmta.org

Saturday, July 18 – Hike on BMT Section 11e from FS221 to Thunder Rock Campground and then on to Ocoee Whitewater Center via Rhododendron Trail

Length: Section 11e is 3.4 miles easy downhill. Rhododendron Trail is a 1.6 mile easy level walk along the Ocoee River.

Hike Description: This Easy Trek hike starts at the intersection of FS 221 and the BMT (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, rafters and kayakers negotiating the rapids. There are picnic tables along the river for lunch. Bring lots of water.

For information on this hike and register to get meeting time and location contact Hike Leader Ralph Heller ([rshbmta AT gmail.com](mailto:rshbmta@gmail.com) or call 770-235-9760).

Friday, August 14 – Waterfall trail hikes (Dukes Creek Falls and Raven Cliff Falls)

Length: Dukes Creek 2.2 easy miles in and out, Raven Cliff 5 miles in and out – easy to moderate

Hike Description: On this day there will be multiple waterfalls. We will warm up with an easy hike on a paved trail to Dukes Creek Falls, a 250 ft. drop. From the Dukes Creek parking lot, it is a short drive to the Raven Cliff trailhead. The Raven Cliff Trail provides four waterfalls, an unnamed 10 footer, an unnamed 35 footer, and upper and lower Raven Cliff Falls. The lower falls, called Raven Cliff Grotto is a cleft in the cave like walls where the water tumbles 40 ft. At the falls area there is also the impressive Raven Cliffs, which are up to 125 feet above the creek. Bring water, bring lunch and bring your camera.

For information on this hike and to register for meeting time and location, contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky (mikepilvinsky@hotmail.com or call 706-889-5254).

Swinging Bridge Road Closures –The USFS is conducting closures of Forest Service Road 816 off Hwy 60 that leads to the popular swinging bridge over the Toccoa River. The closures are every Monday through Wednesday through July 1, 6am until noon. There may be additional closures in the future. The closing are part of a logging operation in the area. For more information contact the Chattahoochee National Forest in Blue Ridge 706-745-6928. While the road is being closed the **bridge and trails remain open**.