



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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MAY 2016

Points of Interest

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President's Column May 2016 by Bob Ruby

BMTA Officers 2015-2016

- President: Bob Ruby
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- TN/NC M/C: Ken Jones
- Smokies Coord: Dick Evans
- Hiking Director: Mike Pilvinsky
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- Publicity: Marcia Lehman
Marge Heller
- Conservation: Peter Busscher
- Past President: David Blount
- Newsletter: Kathy Williams
- State Rep GA: Larry Dumas
- State Rep TN/NC: Rick Harris

National Trails Day Events

This is a reminder that BMTA will participate in two events celebrating National Trails Day. The Georgia event will be held at Vogel State Park near Blairsville on Saturday, June 4, and will offer options for a morning of trail work or hiking followed by a covered dish luncheon. The Tennessee event will be held on Saturday, June 11, and will include work with Boy Scouts on maintaining the Warriors Passage Trail. Details for both are included in this newsletter.

BMTA Annual Meeting

I encourage you to start planning and making reservations now for the BMTA Annual Meeting weekend on November 4-6. The Historic Tapoco Lodge is a unique place for the meeting, and Tom Keene's committee is planning a great weekend of hikes and activities. Details are elsewhere in this newsletter.

Nominating Committee for 2017

As required by the Bylaws, I have appointed and the Executive Committee has approved a Nominating Committee to recommend candidates for BMTA Officers for next year. The committee consists of Tom Keene (Chair), Barry Allen, Joy Forehand and Ken Jones. They will publish their list at least sixty days before the annual meeting. If you are interested in serving, please contact Tom.

Bear Safety

I hate to report it, but there have been two bear attacks on sleeping campers in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The most recent was May 10, 2016, on a man sleeping in his tent near the Spence Field Shelter on the Appalachian Trail. Last year on June 6, 2015, a teenage boy was attacked at Campsite 84 above the Lakeshore Trail section of the BMT. He was in his hammock. Fortunately neither attack was fatal, and the bears were driven off by fellow campers.



BMTA Headquarters

Smokies spokesperson, Dana Soehn, said: “While human injury is rare, we have recently had multiple incidents of bears ripping into tents in the backcountry. The months of May and June are particularly difficult for bears due to the lack of abundant natural foods. Summer foods, primarily berries, will begin to ripen over the next several weeks, and we historically see less aggressive bear behavior after that point. Hikers are reminded to take necessary precautions while in bear country including hiking in groups of two or more, carrying bear spray, complying with all backcountry closures, properly storing food regulations, and remaining at safe viewing distance from bears at all times.”

My comments on this are:

- There is more potential for bear activity at campsites in the Smokies National Park and on the Appalachian Trail due to the heavy use of campsites which encourages bears to put them on their nightly food prowls. We have had few, if any, reports of bear problems at the BMT campsites outside of the Smokies which are generally lightly-used.
- It is critical that food, toothpaste, etc., be hung well out of bear reach, and that **Leave No Trace** principles be followed so as not to leave food, trash and other items that encourage regular visits by foraging bears.
- My wife and I each carry bear spray while hiking in the west, where the grizzly bears are more dangerous than our local black bears. I don't usually carry it while hiking locally, but I do take it when in the Smokies backcountry. I'm not sure how helpful it would be if I'm in a tent or hammock and the bear is outside attacking, but for driving off a bear when I'm outside, it would be effective. Make sure you understand how to use it properly, before needing it.
- Bears are just another reason to hike in groups and to plan ahead for emergencies. Nevertheless, I think the chance of an emergency from some other cause is much higher than from a very rare bear attack in our area.
- In reality, the drive to or from the trailhead is probably a more likely source of injury than a bear attack. In my thinking this is similar to the wide publicity given any airplane crash, even when the drive to the airport is riskier.
- One last tip. I once had a bear visit at a campsite on the AT north of Max Patch. Although it couldn't reach our food, the bear carried off an empty, but interesting smelling, backpack. It contained the camper's car keys, which we recovered nearby after a 45-minute, all-hands search. Even if a backpack doesn't meet the normal requirements for hanging, it's best to hang your pack if possible – especially if it contains critical items.



Celebrate National Trails Day 2016!

Where: Vogel State Park, Pavilion #2

When: June 4, 2016

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 American 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

Leader: Lawson Herron – GATC

9:00 – 12:00 Invasive Plant Eradication

Leader: Laura Northrop – GATC

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

Leader: George Owen – GATC, MHH, BMTA

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

Co-Leaders: Melanie Spamer and Kathy Chastain – GATC, Candy Retter - MHH

Luncheon Program:

Welcome to Vogel: Jennifer Jones – Vogel State Park Manager

Recognition: USFS: Andy Baker, District Ranger, BRRD

GATC: Don Hicks, President

BMTA: Bob Ruby, President

MHH: Tom Shope, President

SEFTC: Darcy Douglas, President

GFW: Sue Harmon

SAWS: Bill Hodge invited

Game: A.T. Challenge

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

Come prepared for your activity: work gloves, sturdy shoes or boots, water, snack, etc.; plan ahead to keep hot food hot or cold food cold for safety prior to the meal; and bring a folding chair or two as seating may be limited during the luncheon.

To register

- for trail work, contact Lawson (lawson144 AT charter.net or 770-993-5231);
- for family friendly hiking contact George (gowen2 AT tds.net or 760-374-4716);
- for conservation contact Laura (bdnlvn AT bellsouth.net or 770-392-0528);
- for other information, contact Joe Boone (booned AT windstream.net or 760-835-2269).

(A large measure of credit goes to Joe Boone for organizing this joint event and for creating this write up.)

Separate BMTA event in TN/NC on June 11:

In addition to this NTD celebration in Georgia, the TN/NC contingent of BMTA has scheduled an event jointly with the Boy Scouts on June 11. The focus there will be maintenance on the Warrior's Passage National Recreation Trail which goes down the other side of Waucheesee Mountain from the BMT.

For more information about this event, watch the bmta.org Activities Page or contact Rick Harris.

BMTA July 4 Event - We Need Your Support!!!

By Ken Jones

The sponsors of the annual July 4th celebration in Etowah, Tennessee, have given us permission to set up the BMT display at the Old Depot. This will be an excellent chance to publicize the Benton MacKaye Trail, and recruit new trail maintainers. Ken and Phyllis Jones will be setting up the display and spending as much time there during the day as possible. However, we need some other volunteers to step forward to help in covering the entire day. If you can assist in this effort, please contact Ken Jones at [w4zug AT windstream.net](mailto:w4zug@windstream.net). **Thanks for any help you may be able to give!**



THE 2016 ANNUAL
 SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS
HEMLOCK CAMP MEETING
 A
 GATHERING OF

KINDRED SPIRITS TO CELEBRATE AND PRESERVE THE MAGNIFICENT HEMLOCK

SUNDAY • JUNE 5 • 10AM to 3PM

ETC PAVILION • ON THE BANKS OF THE COOSAWATTEE RIVER • ELLIJAY, GA
 MAPS AND DIRECTIONS www.SaveGeorgiasHemlocks.org or Google Maps

MUSIC DOWNTOWN ROY- Purveyors of Fine Americana,
 Beach, Blues, Bluegrass, Country, Folk, Reggae,
 Rock and Western Music



 **FOOD** Poole's BBQ
 PLUS Your Own Potluck Dish

PLUS Environmental Displays and Demonstrations
 by Like-Minded Organizations and Friends of the Hemlock

Call 404 219-3876 or Email peggyreich1663@gmail.com **RESERVATIONS**
 Before WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1 • NO CHARGE for MEMBERS **REQUIRED**

COME HEAR Keynote Speaker - Dr. Bud Mayfield
 Premier Researcher of All Things Hemlock



THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNE WITH NATURE AND
 TO CELEBRATE THE HEMLOCK AND OUR MOUNTAIN
 ENVIRONMENT - AN EVENT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.
 SORRY, **NO DOGS** ARE ALLOWED.

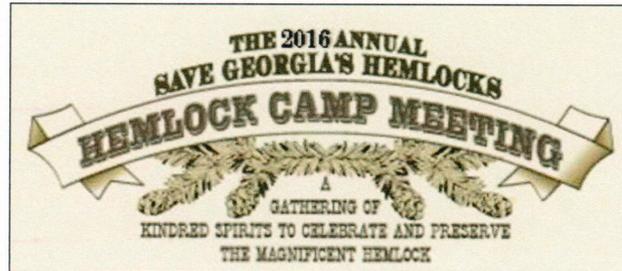
DON'T MISS



Sponsored By
SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS

- Raising public awareness of the hemlock crisis and call for help.
- Recognizing and thanking our members, volunteers and supporters.
- Learning about progress in the HWA battle, the latest research and ways we can help.

www.SaveGeorgiasHemlocks.org • 706 429-8010



EXHIBITOR MESSAGE

DATE: Sunday, June 5, 2016

TIME: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for exhibitors, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for other guests.

PLACE: ETC Pavilion, Legion Rd., Ellijay -- see location map and venue map attached.

AMENITIES: Handicap accessibility, restrooms, electricity at pavilion/stage only, tables with benches in the pavilion, a few more tables and benches along the river.

ADMISSION: Open to the general public, but reservations are required. See general invitation flyer attached.

EXHIBITORS RSVP to 706-429-8010 or donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org.

OTHER GUESTS RSVP to 404-219-3876 or peggyreich1663@gmail.com.

Current Save Georgia's Hemlocks members*, their families, and children under 12: no charge.

Other guests: \$20 individual or \$40 family for new or renewing SGH membership.

Everyone is asked to bring a covered side dish or dessert to share.

* Anyone who has made a donation to SGH (any amount, any kind, including sapling adoptions) since December 1, 2015 is a current SGH member. Memberships are our primary means of support for this event as well as our other educational and service activities throughout the year.

FEATURES: Music by Downtown Roy, Barbecue by Poole's, exhibits and activities by conservation and recreational nonprofits as well as public land managers.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Dr. Bud Mayfield, research entomologist with the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station in Asheville, NC and project leader of the Insects, Diseases and Invasive Plants work unit. He will share a message about the multi-pronged approach to saving the hemlocks, including some of the newest scientific developments and how individuals and groups can help.

SCHEDULE: 9 – 10 a.m.	Exhibitors arrive and set up
10 – noon	Other guests arrive, visit exhibits / activities
Noon – 1 p.m.	Lunch
1 – 2 p.m.	Keynote address
2 – 3 p.m.	More time to visit exhibits / activities
3 – 4 p.m.	Exhibitors take down, clean up, and depart

Booths need to be staffed only from 10 a.m. to noon and then from 2 to 3 p.m.

EXHIBITORS:

- * Please arrive by 9 a.m. and check in at the SGH Check-in Station at the far end of the parking area.
- * You will be able to drive to your booth site to unload and then move your vehicle to the parking area before 10 a.m.
- * Each booth site is approximately 10' x 15', but larger sites can be provided if you let us know what you need. Booths will be given on a first come, first served basis.
- * Bring your own tent or canopy and whatever you need to secure it in case of wind, tables for your display, handouts, and other materials, folding chairs optional for your exhibit staff.
- * There will be no retail vendors at this event, but exhibitors are welcome to bring your organization's merchandise to sell and keep the proceeds for your own use.
- * We want all our guests to be part of Save Georgia's Hemlocks as current, renewing, or new members, but exhibitors are also welcome to solicit members/volunteers for your own organization, and we sincerely hope you will gain many!

Please share the attached general invitation flyer widely, and we look forward to seeing you on June 5. In the meantime, if you have questions or any special requests, please contact Donna Shearer at 706-429-8010 or donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org.

BMTA at First Annual Trout Fest

By Marge Heller

Sponsored by our friends at Trout Unlimited and the Fannin Chamber of Commerce, the First Annual Trout Fest was held in the park at Blue Ridge, on Saturday, April 30th. It was a definite success in terms of number of attendees. The Benton MacKaye display booth had great visibility near one of the entrances to the event. As a result, lots of people stopped by for information on the BMT. Board Members, Larry Dumas & Tom Keene helped to man the booth along with members Jane Keene, Joy Forehand, Phil & Debra Guhl, and Ralph & Marge Heller. Board Member Ken Cissna helped to put up the tent the night before. In addition, Joy's dog, Toccoa, and the Heller's pup, Schatzi, drew the attention of passers-by into our tent. We may have to make them "Honorary Four Footed Members!"



Joy Forehand and Toccoa, Marge & Ralph Heller with Schatzi
"The Honorary Four Footed BMTA Members!"

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BMTA draws attention!!



Phil and Debra Guhl proudly display BMTA shirts!



Schatzi in BMTA finery!



Larry Dumas and Ralph Heller share trail stories!

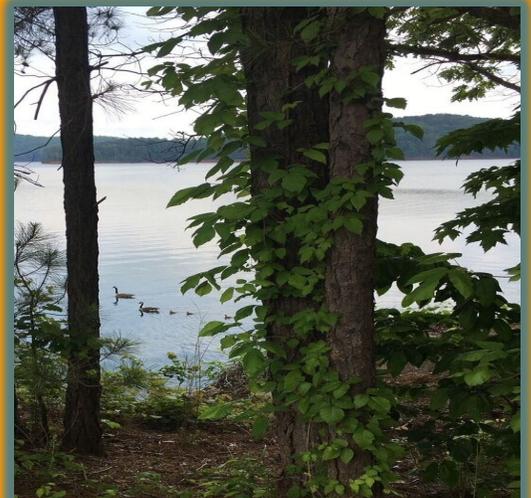


Jane and Tom Keene all smiles!

Amadahy Trail Hike at Carter's Lake

Story courtesy Clayton Webster
Photos courtesy Al Cash & Clayton Webster

Twenty four hikers joined leaders Sara Bland and Mike Pilvinsky on a perfect spring day to indulge in the beauty of both forest and lake. This easy hike has great views as well as plenty of canopy making it a hiker favorite!



Our group was so large that we split up into two groups. Mike Pilvinsky took one group and Sara Bland led the second group. One went clockwise and the other counterclockwise. We met at the halfway point. Then Mike's group took a one mile round trip side trip out on a peninsula to a beautiful campground. The campground is called Boat Camp as the only way to it is by boat, bike, or by hiking. Mike recently led a beginners backpacking BMTA sponsored overnight trip to this site.



Mike Pilvinsky, brown shirt in the center, tells our group some of the history about Carters Lake and the surrounding area. Marcia Lehman, pink shirt, is being a good steward as she has a bag to pick up trash along the trail.



One of the typical campsites at Boat Camp. Each campsite has a grill, tent pads, picnic table, and a pole that will hold two lanterns. Restrooms are nearby. Most have an easily accessible swimming area as well.

We were surprised to see a number of spring wildflowers still hanging on. The trail and surrounding area are really breathtaking. The land around Carters Lake is owned by the Corps of Engineers so development is limited to one marina and a swimming beach making this 62 mile shoreline of the 3,200 acre lake unique among Georgia lakes.

The Amadahy Trail is Mike's favorite trail. He told us that the earthen dam is the largest in Eastern America. The depth finder on his boat has measured 430 feet deep in some places. Some areas are 80 feet deep just a few feet from shore. This is a result of the deep gorge on the Coosawatee River prior to the construction of the dam. It is said that the rapids where the dam is now were the best whitewater in Eastern America. When it was announced that a dam would be built, famous writer James Dickey came up for one last ride on the rapids. He had someone who would meet him at the take-out place. That poor person stumbled onto an active moonshine still operation. The owner of the still told his son to take the guy to the take-out location and if no rafter showed up to kill the guy!! Luckily James Dickey did make it and the guy was spared. Thus the idea for Deliverance was born.



Lunch with a view!

After completing the hike, both groups drove a short distance further into the Woodring Branch Recreation Area to a nice peninsula that had covered picnic tables with a view of the lake in both directions. This is where we had our lunch. The lake was near full pool, and very beautiful with the clear blue green waters sparkling in the sun!

NEW BMT SHIRT BENEFITS THE TRAIL

By Marge Heller

Please check out these great new Benton MacKaye Trail shirts available at Terra Outfitters, in Blue Ridge, GA or available on-line at: <http://terra.atayne.com/>

Atayne shirts are perfect for those who play hard yet tread lightly. The performance tops are made from a lightweight 100% recycled polyester micro mesh fabric that wicks moisture and dries quickly. The photographs are real pictures of the Benton MacKaye Trail in Blue Ridge!

Three scenic designs and one solid green, with logo, are available in men and women's sizes including sleeveless, short sleeves and long sleeves.

Proceeds benefit the BMTA to continue trail conservation efforts thanks to the generosity of Corporate Member, Terra Outfitters, and the manufacturer, Atayne.

Stop by Terra Outfitters to order yours or shop online and support your trail today!



Second Annual Lady Slipper Hike

By Joy Forehand

Photos courtesy of Debra Guhl, Clare Sullivan & Joy Forehand



Debra Guhl, Kathleen Kelly, Joe Kelly, Frank Forehand, Ken Cissna, Bob Brown, Clare Sullivan & Ed Sullivan

The trek continued uphill to the BMT's intersection with the Stanley Gap Trail ... and ... a half mile later across the Tennessee Divide. Just after the Divide, the hikers encountered the first Lady Slipper Garden with beautiful Pink Lady Slippers on both sides of the hill.

Nine BMTA members embarked on the Second Annual Lady Slipper Hike April 29, 2016. The first leg of the journey was a sentimental one. This probably will be the last Lady Slipper Hike where hikers will be able to hike along a quarter-mile section of the BMT trail that follows a pristine creek up to Fall Branch Falls. The trail itself is badly eroded and the USFS decided a reroute is needed. Except for a few finishing touches, the reroute is complete. In fact, the reroute's recently installed rock steps were on display across from the side trail that descends to the falls. The falls itself was beautiful as always as it cascaded gracefully down the tall rock cliff.



Pink Lady Slipper

On the approach to Rocky Mountain, hikers were treated to a variety of Trillium (Trillium Luteum, Grandiflorum Trillium and Catesby's Trillium) as well as huge fern beds, including the majestic Cinnamon Fern, and large patches of distinctive May Apples. The hike continued up a side trail to the top of Rocky Mountain where hikers stopped for lunch. The trees at the top of the mountain were not fully "leafed out" so scenic views of the mountain ridges in the distance were an unexpected bonus.



Trillium



Trillium Luteum

The next stop on the trail was the largest Lady Slipper garden in the area. And, it did not disappoint ... the lovely pink orchid was on both sides of the trail with the blooms extending deep into the woods beyond.

As we proceeded up Scroggin Knob and then down to Weaver Creek, there were numerous small Lady Slipper Gardens, a few Wild Azaleas and even an early Mountain Laurel!



Mountain Laurel

Backpacking the Bridge

By Mike Pilvinsky

On Saturday, May 21st, two BMTA members and three guests headed for the swinging bridge and Highway 60 from Three Forks on the BMT. Melissa Reece and Francis Ellis were first time backpackers from Soddy Daisy, TN. They wanted to use our trip as a shake down to test their gear and to determine if backpacking was something they wanted to pursue as a hobby. Steve Fields from Ellijay was the third guest and BMTA members Bob Brown and Mike Pilvinsky rounded out the group.



Steve, Francis, and Melissa at Long Creek Falls

Section 2 of the BMT was in excellent shape and a pleasure to walk the 18 inch footpath as compared to the heavily used AT on the first mile. We arrived at the swinging bridge about 5:00 PM and began to set up camp. Every campsite on the north side of the bridge was taken by kayakers and folks who had driven to the nearby parking lot so we crossed the bridge to the huge camping area across the Toccoa River bridge.

After setting up the shuttle we started hiking from Three Forks, which is on Forest Service Road 58 located about 4 miles north of Springer Mountain on the AT. Soon we came upon Long Creek Falls where we stopped to enjoy the view and adjust our gear. For the next eight miles we enjoyed the varying terrain, plenty of uphill hiking and acres of beautiful ferns on the mountain sides. Section 2 of the BMT was in excellent shape and a pleasure to walk the 18 inch footpath as compared to the heavily used AT on the first mile.



Bob Brown in a hillside of ferns

After dinner, we were pleasantly amused as we sat on the river bank and watched scores of kayaks and canoes navigating the river and rapids. The canoes were occupied by two and three “Adventure Racers” using kayak paddles. It was comically apparent that only a few of the boaters had much canoeing experience. As the sun went down, we wondered how the boaters would fair in the rapids after dark. Their boats just kept coming and coming with the last ones passing our campsite after 11PM.



Melissa, Francis, and Steve at the campsite under the Swinging Bridge



Mike, enjoying a fresh ham & egg McPita for Sunday Breakfast



Bob Brown putting final touches on his hammock chalet

The next morning we enjoyed our breakfasts, broke camp and completed the remaining trek to the HW 60 parking area. Due to some reroutes the hike is now 13 miles, a mile longer than the distance shown in the 2011 guide book that I was using. Lesson learned: Use current maps and guides for accurate hike planning.

Our two beginning backpackers were outstanding. They had absolutely outstanding attitudes, great problem solving skills, and a wonderful sense of humor. The weather cooperated with us and we all had a memorable experience!

Work Trip Report for May, 2016

By Barry Allen

Our May work trip on Section 5 began in a much different manner than most prior work trips: with a review of emergency procedures and lessons learned from a recent emergency on our trail. Present were Andy Baker, Towdy Tipton and Joe Baker, all of the USFS. Mr. Baker, who is the District Ranger for the Blue Ridge Ranger District, attended the event in order to use many of the lessons learned from our emergency as a Rapid Learning Event for the Forest Service; this Rapid Learning Event will go out to Forest Service employees and Forest Service stakeholders (trail clubs) as a way of learning lessons from the event that Phil Guhl and myself endured on the trail in April (see April's newsletter). Hopefully many of the lessons presented by Andy will help others deal with future trail emergencies.



Work on Section 5 coincided with another event: the Cruel Jewel Race, which is a long distance endurance event held annually on parts of our trail. Wilscot Gap is a major crossing point for the race and was crowded with race observers as we gathered for work on Saturday morning. The group of 20+ work attendees turned on to FS 45 which generally parallels the Benton MacKaye to the summit of Brawley Mtn. At about the half way point of FS 45, we gathered at a set of old bleachers at the base of an area known as Bald Top, looking up a rather sheer cliff face. Among other things, this cliff face has been (and still is) used for Boy Scout training in climbing and rappelling. And it served as a perfect setting for our emergency review and tail gate safety session.

We wrapped up our review and tail gate safety session by about 10:45 and divided into two work groups for sling blade and brush cutter work. We cut into the trail below Bald Top, with one group proceeding west to Ledford Gap and Brawley Mtn. The other group proceeded east toward Ga 60 and Wilscot Gap. The work was straightforward: knock down the early season weeds and poison ivy along approximately two miles of trail.

But we had to be careful of the race participants who would be spaced out throughout the day along our work route. To help warn the workers as participants approached, we used flankers at both ends of the work group. And it worked without a hitch. As race participants approached the work group, the word quickly spread along the trail to move back and make way. By the end of the day, we had cleared almost two miles of trail, and had absolutely no problems with the race participants.

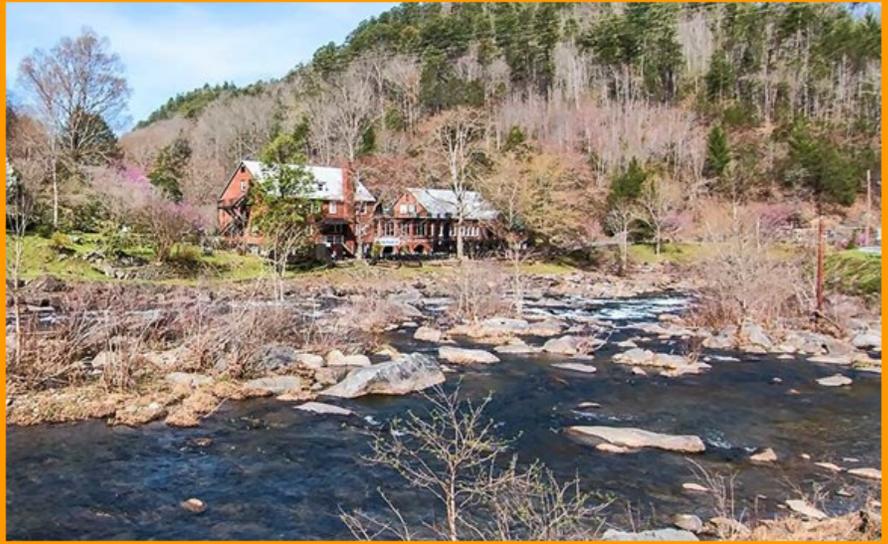


Many thanks to our Forest Service partners, and especially Towdy Tipton; Towdy worked with us throughout the day, ending at about 3:30 at GA 60. It was a warm day, and we all felt the work after several hours of sling blading. And thanks to everyone who showed up to help – and especially Robert Collins – who took some time off another training session to help share his learning as a First Responder.

I look forward to seeing you all next month as we work Section 6 in June; we need to do a little fine tuning on the reroute to Fall Branch – particularly on the ramp up and down the Falls. **Hope to see you there!**

BMTA Annual Meeting: Save the Dates! November 4-6 at Historic Tapoco Lodge Plan your weekend getaway NOW!

by Tom Keene



This year's BMTA annual meeting will be at the Historic Tapoco Lodge near Robbinsville, North Carolina -- and of course hard by the Smokies. Over the last couple of years the reroutes of the BMT have made this beautiful lodge among our nearest neighbors. In fact, as many of you know, the BMT now runs right through the grounds of the lodge.

These days a north-bound BMT thru-hiker can take a right turn at the lodge and in thirty steps be seated on the patio of the Tapoco River Grill, consuming a craft beer and a made-to-order pizza! Or our hiker could stop at the reception desk (like George Owen below) to check in to one of the lodge's homey, comfortable rooms, either in the lodge itself or in one of its twenty nearby cabins.

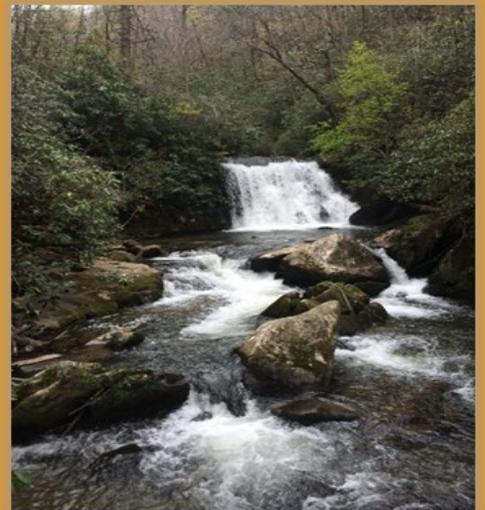
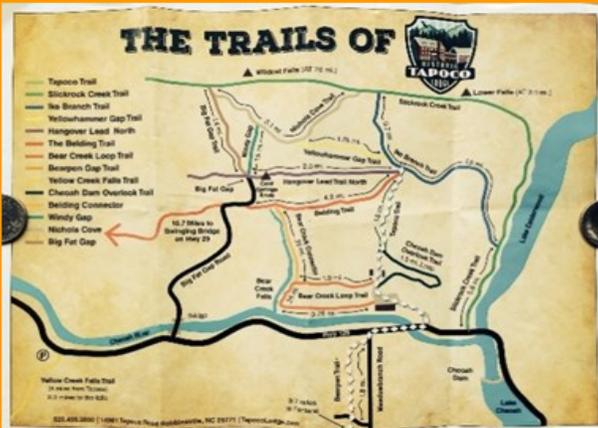


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Intense Planning: As you can also see here our hardworking Annual Meeting Planning Committee has inspected the lodge's key facilities with the greatest care to assure you will be well provided for!



Trails, Trails, Trails: As important as the lodge itself, is its spectacular setting and the wide array of nearby trails of all lengths and degrees of difficulty. The trail map and sign below include only a few of the available trails. Here are a couple of shots taken during our 20 minute walk to the spectacular Yellow Creek Falls.



Local History: The Tapoco Lodge has an interesting history. Among other notable tales, the lodge's basement, now the site of the Tapoco River Grill, was fitted out as a government bomb shelter during WWII because U.S. intelligence felt the nearby Fontana Dam would be a prime target for the Luftwaffe! We will hear more about local Graham County history from our featured speaker Saturday evening, Marshall McClung, Forest Service retiree, a noted local historian and after dinner speaker.

Make a Weekend of It!: For our members living in metro Atlanta, the Tapoco Lodge is a bit of a drive, about 165 miles. Our solution – make this year's annual meeting a real weekend getaway. Save the date, and start planning now!

A Weekend of Activities: To accommodate weekenders we will have hikes of various lengths and difficulty beginning Friday after lunch, during the day Saturday, and again Sunday morning. Friday evening will see an informal social evening in the Tapoco River Grill and, for those who wish, a feature film in the lodge's Tin Can Theatre. Saturday evening brings the annual meeting and banquet in the lodge's Jasper Event Space. It should be an eventful and enjoyable weekend!

Lodging Reservations: Lodging reservations and payment must be made **directly** with the Tapoco Lodge or other location.

Meeting Registration/Payment for Saturday Dinner: Meeting registration and payment for the dinner (\$25 per person) will be available on line via the BMTA website, or by mail. Keep an eye out for details in the BMTA newsletter and on the BMTA website homepage.

The Information (and links) You Need:

- **The Website:** The Tapoco Lodge has a superb website, plenty of great visuals and loads of information on rooms, facilities, local resources and attractions. Check it out: <http://tapocolodge.com/>
- **Annual Meeting Discount Prices at Tapoco Lodge:** Lodge or cabin rooms regularly start at \$119 per night, as shown on the website. Prices start at \$99 with the Annual Meeting Weekend discount. Be sure to ask for BMTA meeting rates when you call to reserve a room
- **Cabin Notes:** The cabins are only 50 to 100 yards away from the lodge. Cabins typically have two or three separate rooms, rented separately. Each room has its own full bath, most have their own front porch, or at least share a porch with an adjacent room. Rooms sleep from 2 to 5. There is a cabin-by-cabin description on the website – with photos.



- **Camping Options:** Most campsites close at the end of October, but two nearby sites will be open year round:

Calderwood Campground (about a mile north of the lodge – i.e., walking distance – on US129 on Lake Calderwood). The campground is mainly intended for RVs but has plenty of space, porta potties and picnic tables.



Calderwood Campground

NSF'S Horse Cove Campground (near the entrance to Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest; 12.7 miles and 23 minutes from the lodge).



Horse Cove Campground

NOTA BENE: Both of these sites are first come, first served (i.e. no reservations). The only amenities are a privy or porta potty. Neither will have drinking water after October 31. So BYO or filter – though you could fill water containers at the lodge easily for Calderwood.

- **Other lodging options:** The **Phillips Motel** and the **Microtel Inn and Suites** both in Robbinsville, NC (15 miles and 21 minutes) have rooms starting about \$65.

It should be fun! Plan on being there – and make your reservations NOW!

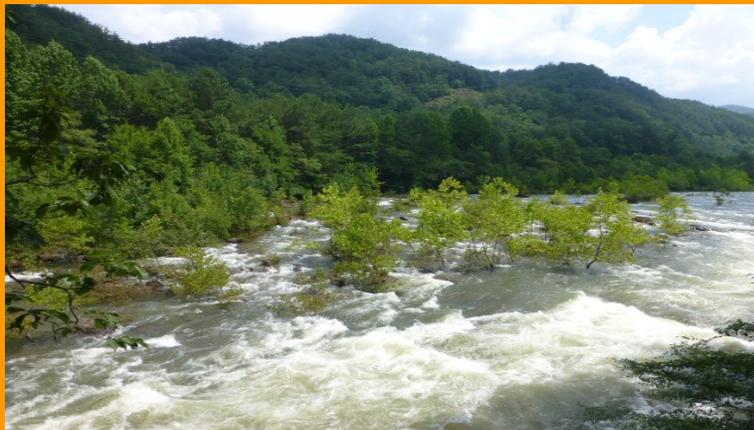
Questions?: email Tom Keene <tkbmta AT gmail.com >

June Hikes

By Mike Pilvinski Hiking Director

- **June 1st-Bob Bald** Moderate 7 miles in TN and NC. Call or email Rick Harris (513) 260-1184 cell, (423) 253-6358 home or email harrisri AT aol.com. Hikers are to meet behind the Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center at 9 AM then carpool from there.
- **June 25-Section 11e plus Rhododendron Trail** along the Ocoee River. Easy 4.4 miles near the Ocoee Whitewater Center. Contact hike leaders Claire and Ed Sullivan: (clare7982 AT gmail.com).

* Note some of these hikes are considerable driving distances.
Please contribute gas money to your driver when you carpool. Thank You!



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 part of a logging operation in the area. For more information, contact the Chattahoochee National Forest in Blue Ridge (706) 745-6928. Although the road is closed during logging operations, the bridge and trails remain open.

Parking Solution for Highway 515/US76 Crossing Location

Hikers on the section of the BMT that crosses Highway 515/US 76 between Ellijay and Blue Ridge, no longer have to park next to the highway or along County Road 158 on the east side of the highway. Julie Jabaley, Executive Director of the Craddock Center, has given permission for hikers to use the parking lot next to the Center which is located on the hill just west of the highway. Look for the Craddock Center sign and take the road up the hill. The trail passes just behind the Center. Backpackers may also park their cars overnight. The facility is open weekdays for hikers to use the restrooms or to get a fresh supply of water.

**The deadline for articles for the June Newsletter is Wednesday June 22, 2016
Thanks for your support!!!!**