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BMTA Officers 2016-2017

President:	Tom Keene
Vice President:	Dick Evans
Secretary:	Joy Forehand
Treasurer:	Margaret Evans
GA M/C:	Barry Allen
TN/NC M/C:	Ken Jones
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Ken Cissna
Store:	Ken Cissna
Membership:	Ralph Heller
Publicity:	Marcia Lehman Marge Heller
Conservation:	Peter Busscher
Past President:	Bob Ruby
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
State Rep GA:	Larry Dumas
State Rep TN/NC:	Rick Harris



BMTA Headquarters



President's Column

June 2017

by Tom Keene

Backwoods vs Back Office NomCom2018 and the BMTA

Most trail associations have the same problem: Just about everyone likes getting out in the woods, whether on a fun hike or on a maintenance trip. But it's tough finding folks, year in and year out, to do the behind the scenes organizational work of the association.

For the BMTA, much of that work is done by the BMTA's Board of Directors, the 14-member governing body of our association. Once again this year we have several long-serving members of the BMTA Board rotating off. We are looking for replacements. Read on to see how YOU can help.

We've just named the Nominations Committee for 2018 officers (aka NomCom2018). Long-time board secretary **Joy Forehand** is chairing NomCom2018. Other members include **Darcy Douglas, Dick Evans, Ralph Heller, and Ken Cissna**.

The Process: The NomCom produces a slate of candidates for all board positions. That list is circulated to the general membership 60 days before the annual meeting, which occurs this year Nov. 3-5 at Vogel State Park in Georgia. (*Save the Dates!*) Additional nominations are invited at the annual meeting, but in practice they are rare. So... the NomCom's work over the next month or so is crucial to the future of the organization.

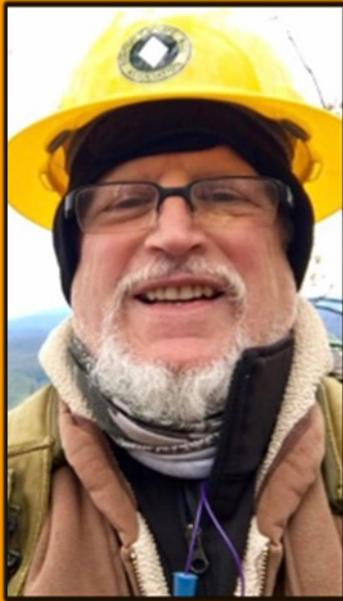
Open Positions: As I write, current holders in the following positions will be rotating off the board: Vice President, Smokies Coordinator, Tennessee/North Carolina Maintenance Director, Publicity Coordinator, and Membership Chairman. Plainly, Joy's group has work to do!

Get Involved: Would you or someone you know be interested in helping out on the board? Or elsewhere behind the scenes? You would not have to jump right in as a board member and director; many of the directors have a team of two or three people working with them to get the job done. Getting involved in one of those teams is a great way to see what's involved and begin the process of giving back to the trail you love and enjoy so much. (Also, if I may say so, our back office group really is a great group of people to work with and get to know!)

If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or nominations, contact NomCom2018 Chair, Joy Forehand at 706-946-0336 or jwfbg AT gmail DOT com.

We look forward to hearing from you! TK

Larry Van Dyke: A special volunteer



It's not easy getting a picture of **Larry Van Dyke**. That's because Larry invariably serves as the photographer on his numerous Tennessee and North Carolina work trips. He's always behind the camera but never in front of it. **Ken Jones** had to lift the selfie you see here from Larry's Facebook page!

Ken describes Larry as the most frequent and consistent trail worker in his Tennessee group. He maintains Section 18a, which is partly in the Tellico District of the Cherokee NF (TN) and partly in the Cheoah District in the Nantahala (NC). In addition to working on his own section, Larry has been a regular on monthly work trips on both sides of that TN/NC line. He also works when available with Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen, a key collaborator with the BMTA in the area.

Thanks for all you do, Larry.

Blaze of the Month?



Maybe.

Russian hackers sent me this image from an unnamed location along the trail. It might be a BMT blaze. Or, it could be our six-year-old grandson's effort to draw a stingray on a trail-side tree.

Your call!

Maintainers Corner – NOW is the time...

To get out to your section with a swing-blade in hand and pruners in your pocket. Or perhaps substitute a fire-rake for the swing-blade; a rake can take out green briars and brambles as well as a swing-blade, with the bonus that you can also use it to clean out the occasional water diversions along the way. Anyway, time to attack that mid-summer vegetation. With the warm winter and rainy spring, vegetation along the trail is extra intrusive this year. If you wait until August, you may discover a hiker or two deceased from exposure after becoming entangled in those green briars!

Winds in the Park

by Marcia Lehman

Well, Arts in the Park this spring gave us some excitement for sure! A strong storm came through early Sunday morning and dragged our tent frame down the street, damaging it beyond repair. Unfortunately that prevented our participating on Sunday. The tent, though very wet, survived and all our materials that had been placed in their respective plastic tubs by the staff on Saturday afternoon were also perfectly fine. We'll be ready to go with a new frame in time for the fall events.



The really good news is that Saturday turned out to be our most successful day at any festival in which we've participated. In fact we had 75 people sign in; 33 interested in trail maintenance and five that said they may be interested. This is more interest in trail maintenance than we've ever had at any event in the past when we had two days to solicit volunteers!! Fantastic team!!

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Many thanks go out to Hank Baudet, Lina Prince, Ralph Heller and Joy and Frank Forehand who staffed our tent on Saturday. They did a great job of reeling in festival goers and getting them interested in our trail as well as trail maintenance!! Further thanks to those who volunteered for Sunday but did not get to work: Ken Cissna, June Quinn, Clare Sullivan and Larry Dumas. Thanks to Ken, Hank and Lina who also helped set up the tent on Friday afternoon. Fortunately, the Saturday shift folks had meticulously placed all our display materials back in their respective plastic tubs, so those were all dry. Much appreciation goes to Ken who arrived on Sunday morning to find our tent, supplies, etc. all bundled up together. The tent was so wet! He helped load my car with everything, followed me to my house where we draped all the tent walls and table covers on chairs in my garage to dry out. He took the canopy to his garage to dry. All is well.

It's such a pleasure to work with all of our volunteers! Each and every one of them exhibit the enthusiasm and dedication to our mission that makes all of our events a win for BMTA.



Return to Rough Ridge Day Hike

by Bob Ruby

Last fall there was a major wildfire in the Cohutta Wilderness which temporarily closed but didn't actually burn the BMT. On January 15 I led a BMTA day hike to check out the fire damage. It turned out to be mostly on the northwest side of Rough Ridge.

On Saturday, July 15, we will have a Return to Rough Ridge hike to take a look at the forest recovery, which should be substantial.

This will be a six mile out-and-back hike on the Rough Ridge Trail which is located on the southern portion of the Cohutta Wilderness. It is an interior trail, accessed by a 0.4 mile walk on the East Cowpen Trail from the Three Forks parking area. The Rough Ridge Trail is a seven mile trail that is rated Strenuous due to its final steep drop down to the Jacks River but we will only walk the very pleasant slightly-rolling three mile section to the start of the steep descent.

The group limit is 12 since it is a wilderness area. To register contact Bob Ruby at bmtabob AT gmail.com or 404-252-8888.

Total Solar Eclipse Coming to the BMT August 21

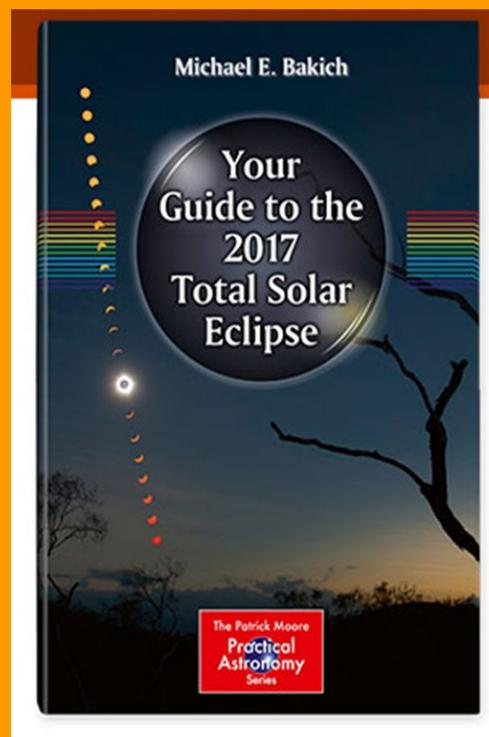
By Darcy Douglas

The Eclipse is coming!!! It has been suggested we have hikes along the Benton MacKaye Trail for viewing the eclipse scheduled for August 21 of this year. While views should be great at certain open spots such as Whigg Meadow, getting protective equipment to those locations and being sure everyone uses it properly seems a bit unwieldy. The attached site (click to access) should provide you with information for safe viewing. Safe means that you still have your vision as you know it afterward. Looking directly at the sun is always a poor idea but when the brightness is limited as during an eclipse it is rather tempting to just look!

The items in this article can be accessed through Discover Magazine. Contact Darcy Douglas if you would like to have the links to these (bmtadarcy AT yahoo.com). There is actually a lot of information out there to learn about safe viewing. Check your internet sites! While total solar eclipses occur more than once a year, they are most often visible on a part of the globe inaccessible to us. This one will be visible over a long stretch of land in our country which is why there seems to be a great deal of information published. Of course cloud cover will make viewing rather dismal and we cannot schedule the weather, even in 2017. Learn and enjoy!

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Covered Bridge to Covered Bridge:

by Ken Cissna

It was a bright sunny day in May when 20 of us, including nine guests, started up the hill from the covered bridge on JoAnn Sisson Road. We stopped often to enjoy the scenery and wildflowers. We indulged in a long stop at the Sisson Chapel and again at the Sisson Shelter, one of the few shelters on the BMT. We went just past the second covered bridge to Indian Rock where we rested briefly before heading back down the hill. We made pretty quick work of the downhill hike. Several of us retired to the Pink Pig for post-hike refreshments.



Hikers included: members Ken Cissna (hike leader), Ruth Horn, Paul McCord, Martha Fowler, Donna Pugliese, David and Victoria Kelsey, Beth Roberts, Betty Sammis, Brenda Padgett, Ralph Heller (co-leader), and guests David Pugliese, Charan Tuteja, Steve Cantel, Sharon Brewer, June Quinn, Debra Teer, Brent Sally, and Bill and Dianne Murphy.

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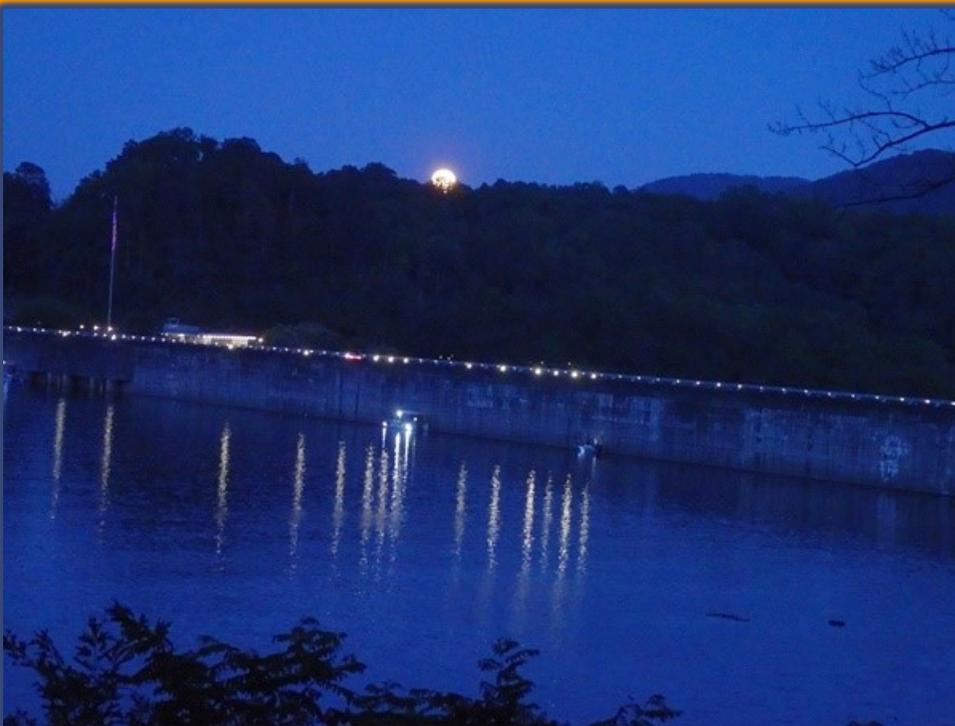
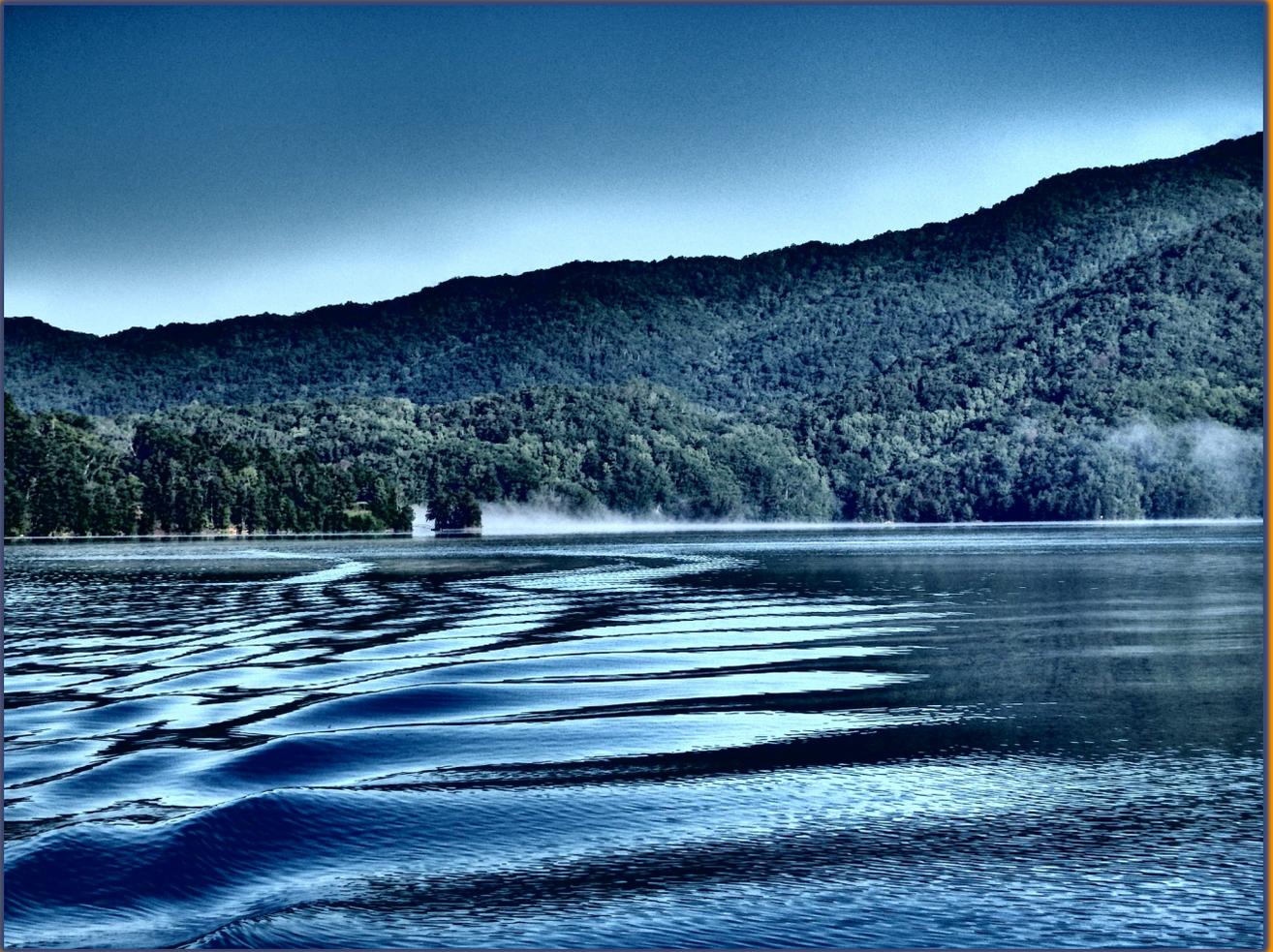
BMTA Work Trip Rescues Four from Lake Fontana

by Dick Evans

One aspect of the BMTA that many folks are unaware of is that we clean campsites along the 36+ mile stretch of Lakeshore Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These nine sites are used not only by backpackers, but also horseback riders and boaters along the length of Fontana Lake. While the hikers and horse riders police up the campsites pretty well, not so much with the boaters. Typically, we find larger items of trash, including wheelbarrows, portable toilets, large grills and lots of tin cans. This year's trip was no different. Usually we are able to use one of the boats from the fine folks at the Fontana Marina to visit these sites. This year a North Carolina Wildlife Officer joined us for the first trip. After a normal departure to the furthest point of the lake and starting back, we found that the boat had only one fuel tank, resulting in us running out of fuel in the middle of the lake in the late morning. Fortunately a call to the Marina brought a rescue with fuel to continue the work with only a relatively short drift in the bright sun. After completing two more sites we opted to return to the Marina for more fuel before attempting Hazel and Eagle Creek campsites. On the way back our sharp-eyed Wildlife Officer spotted what appeared to be two persons on a "boogie board", frantically waving, in the middle of the lake. Diverting to them we found four Appalachian Trail Thru Hikers taking a "Zero Day" at the Fontana Hilton Shelter. They had found a piece of styrofoam and enticed with the nice weather decided that floating around on the lake would be a good thing albeit no oars, no shoes but a copious supply of alcohol. By the time we found them they were being blown easterly in the middle of the lake headed for Bryson City. We were able to bring them on board and tow the float to a trash storage cove then return them to the shelter, a bit sun-burned and chastised by the Wildlife Officer about poor decision making. Probably the first time a BMTA Work Trip rescued folks on the water!



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After Memorial Day weekend, we were able to return and clear the remaining four sites, although we had to skip Upper Lost Cove due to very heavy flow of water in the creek on the trail. Altogether, we collected two boat loads of trash from the locations, adjusted the bear cable systems and cleared brush from those areas.

June Work Report

by Barry Allen



Taking it one step at a time!!

June's work trip was a low-key affair. After a National Trails Day event in early June it was time for a few members to resume work on a long unfinished project at Fall Branch Falls. Five of us met on the second Saturday to resume work on the steps just above the Falls: Bob Ruby, Phil Guhl, Ken Cissna, George Owen and myself.

The never-ending steps have been under construction in fits and starts for about two years. In that time at least 35 different folks have shared a day of labor on the steps and all who have lifted a sledge, swung a pick or carried a bucket of gravel realize the difficulty of the project. After the June trip, the step count was up to 28 steps completed with perhaps six or seven steps remaining to finish the ramp to the falls. We average three to four steps installed per outing, so another two or three trips ought to wrap things up!! Please come by and have a look at our rock quarry the next time you are in the vicinity.

Having heard a rumor that Congress is taking on both health-care and tax reform, we decided to show our own ability to multi-task. After busting rock and laying cross-ties for a few hours, we sent two former BMTA Presidents to remove a blowdown at Watson Gap.

The remaining team drove to the Sisson Property and removed another blowdown. Unlike Congress, we worked straight through until the tasks were complete, skipping lunch recess until steps were in and trees were gone.

And to cap things off on Saturday the 17th our sawyer team met to clear trees from Flat Top Mountain to Fowler Mountain – five miles in and five miles out. Many thanks to Steve and Connor Bayliss and Robert Collins for a long day in the woods. (And a special thanks to Robert and Steve for patching things up after yours truly fell and cut his cheek). What a team!

Next month, we plan to introduce a version of our own infrastructure plan on Section 8. Our bipartisan effort will include trimming, blazing and swing-blading our way from Flat Top Mountain. to Halloway Gap. Hope to see you there!

New Sign for Falls

by Marge Heller



Members Frank and Joy Forehand installed one directional sign on the BMT where our trail joins the Stanley Gap Trail above Fall Branch Falls. Thanks to Mr and Mrs Forehand for their time and talent!!!



JULY WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Section 8

By Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Sections 8f and 8g
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, July 8, 2017
- ◆ **Meet:** 8:00 at Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge or 9:00 at Dyer Gap/Dyer Cemetery
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** **Blaze renewal, lopping, trimming and sling blade work**
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384

Please join us on Saturday, July 8 as we work remote Section 8. We will be working from Flat Top Mountain to Halloway Gap with loppers, paint brushes and sling blades.

This section of trail has not been worked in some time; one section maintainer is out of the country and the other section maintainer has recently left and is being replaced by a new couple. We need your help to get the trail up to standards so come join us on a gorgeous, fern shrouded walk in the woods.

If you have paint brushes and white exterior paint, then please bring them with you (I'll bring blaze templates). We'll provide loppers and sling blades for those who would like to help trim back the growth. I hope to see you there.

Smokies Coordinator Needed

Enjoy hiking in the Smokies? Want to help BMTA with our obligations in the Smokies ... and ... get to enjoy being out on Fontana Lake to boot? Then the position of Smokies Coordinator may be for you!

The description for the position in the Bylaws is:

The Smokies Director shall work closely with the Backcountry Coordinator of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, or other designated official, to determine appropriate maintenance work for the BMTA and coordinate BMTA members' efforts to complete that work.

To learn more about the position, please contact Joy Forehand, [jwfbgra AT gmail.com](mailto:jwfbgra@gmail.com) or call [706-946-0336](tel:706-946-0336).

BARRY NEEDS YOU!!

AUGUST WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Section 10

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Sections 10c and 10d
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, August 12, 2017
- ◆ **Meet:** 8:00 at Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge or 9:00 at Dally Gap
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Lopping, trimming and sling blade work
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry ATgmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384

Please join us on Saturday, August 12 as we work Section 10 in the Cohutta Wilderness. This will be a joint work event with Team Conasauga, Back Country Horsemen and the United States Forest Service. I need a great showing from the Benton MacKay Trail Association, so please put this on your calendar. This is a long stretch of trail – five miles to be exact. With good turnout, my goal is to take three to four adventurous folks all the way to Double Spring Gap to work with the horsemen on the stretch of trail from Double Spring back to Hemp Top. The rest of the group will be spread out from Dally to north of Hemp Top. The day is over when the horsemen meet up with the rest of the group coming from Hemp Top. Several years ago we did a similar event and ended the day with a cookout, including hamburgers, hotdogs and all the fixins, complete with watermelon and dessert; we could also use volunteers to help coordinate food, drink and cooking at Dally Gap – ending the day around 4:00.



BMTA- Chestnut Mountain- Thunder Rock Hike

by Clare Sullivan

The rosebay rhododendron and wild hydrangeas were at their peak for our hike. What a joy! Sixteen hikers watched the "water release" arrive at the Ocoee Whitewater Center and fill the riverbed at 10:30 a.m. prior to beginning the hike, a memorable sight. We welcomed five first time BMTA hikers: Bill and Diane Murphy, Kathy Wosyluk, Joan Correll and Steve Pruett. Next was a shuttle to the top of Chestnut Mountain via FS Roads 45 and 221. Ruth Horn and Bob Brown rode in the "cool car". Ruth was our youngest hiker, "age 82".



We began down an old logging road, BMTA Section 11e and Chestnut Loop to the Thunder Rock Express Trail. TR Express is a single track, all-downhill trail with two wooden bridges 1.5 miles. There's a bicycle jump on the trail.

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From TR Express we walked to the beautiful Rhododendron Trail which parallels the Ocoee River up to the Ocoee Whitewater Center's picnic area. Crossing four more wooden bridges we stopped on the boardwalk above the river to watch rafts ride four rapids. There were squeals of fun and excitement. Interesting sights along our way were a gall and a trunkless tree.





Our 4.2 mile hike ended with lunch at the picnic tables. Thanks to Ann Miller for the cold refreshing watermelon sticks. Other hikers included Martha Fowler, Karen Martin, Paul McCord, Cincy Minick, June Quinn, Ed Sullivan and Polly Warren.



Upcoming Hikes

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules a minimum of two hikes per month, one of five to eight miles and moderate difficulty, and one that is shorter and easier. In addition, we have occasional backpacking hikes and more difficult ones that might be called “hardy hikes.” Occasionally we co-sponsor hikes with other organizations. Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

If you are interested in leading a hike or have a hike you’d like to see us offer with someone else leading, please contact me at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next two months are listed below. More will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates.

July 1st (Saturday) Jacks River from Dally Gap
9 miles, easy to moderate.
Contact Hike Leader Ginny Smith at gmsmith123 AT hotmail.com

July 14th (Friday) Watson Gap to junction with Hemptop Trail
7.6 miles, moderate
Contact Hike Leader Darcy Douglas at bmtadarcy AT yahoo.com

July 15th (Saturday) “After the Fire” #2 – Rough Ridge and Cowpen Trails
Six month follow-up to January’s hike on same trails
Contact Hike Leader Bob Ruby at bmtabob AT gmail.com

July 22nd (Saturday) Tanasi Trail System at the Ocoee Whitewater Center Rhododendron and Old Copper Road Trail
3.5 miles, easy; plus 1-mile trail around the Ocoee Whitewater Center
Contact Hike Leader Larry Dumas at ldumas AT tds.net

August 24th (Thursday) Emery Creek Trail
5-6 miles, moderate. Twenty-two stream crossings, one knee high. Two waterfalls
Contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky at mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com

November 3-5 Annual BMTA Association Meeting-Reserve Now!!

Make plans to attend the 2017 Benton MacKaye Trail Association Annual Meeting November 3rd to 5th, 2017, at Vogel State Park in Georgia. This year's events will be a bit different as the Annual Meeting will be on Friday night, not Saturday. Vogel State Park has cabins, campsites and RV sites. Just Google the park and **make your reservations directly**. We will post the meal details later as time nears. Plans are for a communal bonfire on Saturday night, allowing for longer hikes that day so folks can experience all the great hiking in that area.

July Newsletter Deadline is July 26, 2017-Thank you!!