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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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President's Column March 2017 by Tom Keene

Talk of the Trail: Ever heard of a map?

Our website email response team recently had a series of questions from a comically ill-informed (would-be) through-hiker. They handled it with great diplomacy. Once it was over, **Ken Cissna** offered this gem of a comment:

*Reminds me of the guy that **Mike Pilvinsky** met at Springer Mountain a few weeks ago who was staying there for the third consecutive night. He'd gotten there from Amicalola for his first night. Started the next day on the AT, and somehow to his amazement, after hiking for several hours, found himself back there. We all know how. Next day he starts out again with the same result: back to **Springer**. Ever heard of a map? Any idea about blazes?*

Blaze of the Month



Speaking of Ken C ...photo at left-courtesy of **Marge Heller** -shows our esteemed hike director posing next to a crisp BMT blaze on the corner post of a covered bridge in the Sisson's Cherry Log property. The small sign above the blaze was put there in the late 1990's by **Laurence Jump**. Laurence maintained the section, with a certain idiosyncratic flair, as he did everything, for most of that decade. The sign is not exactly regulation – typical for Laurence! But, it's a good reminder to motorists, many of them weekend renters, which trail runs through their cabin community.

After last month's mention of the Toccoa River blob blaze, **Barry Allen** asked me to remind all maintainers that he has blaze templates for those who want them. (There are also a number of useful points regarding blazes on the [Section Maintainers Guidelines](#) page.) Let me hastily add that the point of the Blaze of the Month feature is certainly not to create a "Blaze Nazi" mentality! Rather we hope to increase awareness and appreciation of our blazes.

Let's call it "blaze aesthetics!"

Help Wanted:

Publicity Co-Director **Marcia Lehman** is looking for volunteers to staff the BMTA tent at two spring festivals in Blue Ridge: Trout Fest, April 29 (set-up Apr. 28; take down Apr. 29) and Arts in the Park, May 27-28 (set-up May 26/take down, May 28). Can you help? Contact Marcia - mlehman AT yahoo DOT com. See her article farther down in this newsletter.

Maintainer's Corner: It's time for spring cleaning!

That is, now is the time for a quiet, easy day on your section with fire-rake or garden rake in hand cleaning the leaves out of your water diversions. Even the best diversions won't work if they are clogged with water-soaked leaves. Last year's leaves are down; now is the time to clear the diversions and a good exit path before the spring rains erode the trail. Rebuilding or improving the diversion structure can wait for another day; right now the priority is getting the leaves out of all diversions – and cleared from the runoff exit path. A fire-rake is the optimal tool, but a plain old garden rake will do just fine. That's what I use. Enjoy your day in the woods!



Old Friends – Marty Dominy

We were delighted to see Marty Dominy appear for February's Georgia Work Trip near the Toccoa River swinging bridge. Marty can't make it every month; it's a long drive up from Warner Robbins, GA. But we are glad when he does. I attended my first BMTA annual meeting in 1998. Marty Dominy was then ending his second spell as president of the association. He also served as president in 1991-92. But Marty is probably best known in the BMTA for using his civil engineer training to design and supervise the building of many bridges along our trail.

Characteristically, Marty came fully equipped. He just happened to have a portable generator in the back of his truck (shown above), as well as a skilsaw behind the seat in the cab! These came in very handy to score the 6X6 steps we were installing to give hikers better footing coming down those steps on rainy days. Good to see Marty again – to say nothing of meeting his portable generator for the first time!

We Need You!!

By Marcia Lehman

This is going to be another exciting year for BMTA! There will be many opportunities for our members to help us promote the BMTA and hiking in general at many events scheduled throughout 2017. Our new event tent has definitely attracted many more people— giving us the opportunity to promote the Benton MacKaye Trail, trail maintenance and BMTA membership.

You don't have to be an expert on BMTA or hiking to greet people and show your enthusiasm for hiking to man the tent during the event. The tent will be stocked with numerous BMTA materials, hiking maps and other valuable information for those that stop by. So, if you have a couple of hours to spare on any of these dates, please contact Marcia Lehman, Co-Chair BMTA Publicity at [mlehman10 at Yahoo.com](mailto:mlehman10@Yahoo.com) or 404-229-6058.

Schedule of events

Event	Location	Date
Troutfest	Blue Ridge	April 29
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	May 27-28
Arts in the Park	Blue Ridge	October 14-15
Apple Festival	Ellijay	October 21-22



TN/NC February Work Trip

by Ken Jones

Our regular monthly work trip day certainly started with a "Bang." The lightning, thunder, wind, and rain woke most of us up around 2 am, with the rain continuing until about 7 am. But by the time our work crew of seven volunteers made it to the trailhead we had blue sky (as shown in the picture below). The crew tackled brushing out and logging out Section 12c, from Kimsey Highway Crossing to McFarland Road. This section is 2.4 miles long, and has not had a section maintainer for a number of years. We now have a new maintainer, Paul Brame, who has agreed to take this section, but unfortunately was not able to be with us for this trip. We certainly appreciated another new section 12d volunteer, Joe Solesbee, working with us for the first time on this trip. We plan to work on Joe's section in April to help give him a good starting point for future maintenance work. We also very much appreciate Larry Dougherty working with us for the first time on a monthly work trip. Larry is a Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen member, and is a part of their weekly work crew. We tackled our work for the day with four brush cutters, a chainsaw, loppers, and sling blade to clear this section. With such a great crew, we were able to brush out and log out the entire section. After retrieving our vehicles, we finished the day with cold lemonade provided by Phyllis Jones.

We thank the following volunteers for a very productive and safe work trip: Phyllis Jones, Joe Solesbee, Ed Sullivan, Clare Sullivan, Larry Van Dyke, Larry Dougherty, and Ken Jones.



The hard working crew, minus the photographer, Larry Van Dyke.

BMTA to Hike Inn

by Ken Cissna

Twenty of us departed for a night at the Len Foote Hike Inn, but not all at the same time or even on the same day or from the same place. First to depart that morning and first to arrive were Howard Baggett, Hank Baudet, and Lina Prince. Next to depart was Ken Cissna's group, which left Amicalola Falls about 10:20 am, hiking fairly slowly and arriving just before 2:00 pm: Joe Cantwell, Celine Melton, Gloria Holton, Mary MacEachron, and Clare Sullivan were in Ken C's group. The fastest group was undoubtedly Pam Sullivan, Candy Retter, and Laurie and Russ Colombo. Toward the middle were Gilbert and Jane Treadwell, in one group, and Lynn Dwyer and Millie Hughes, in another. The award for walking the longest distance to get to the Hike Inn, as well as for the earliest start, goes to Ed Sullivan and Bob Brown, who hiked more than 20 miles over two days starting from near the Suspension Bridge on the BMT and spending the night in the Three Forks area. You might think they'd be especially grateful for the Hike Inn food, but they had steak for their evening meal on the trail. Last to arrive may have been Frank Forehand and Ralph Heller.



Bob Brown and Ed Sullivan took the long way!



Lunching on logs! The best seats in the “House.”

Bill Buford, Manager of the Hike Inn, did double presentation duty, giving the newcomers to the Hike Inn the tour of the facility before dinner and then entertaining and educating us with his incredible photos of Yosemite after dinner. After the presentation, a number of us adjourned to the Sunrise Room for a rousing game of Apples to Apples. As always, meals were excellent! For dinner we were treated to roast turkey, dressing, green beans and salad; and for breakfast, scrambled eggs, bacon, grits, biscuits and gravy. The weather cooperated nicely! Some returned by the AT approach trail; others went back the way we came up. We met NOBO thru hikers just beginning their journeys on both trails.



About to Head Back

Left to right: Standing – Russ Colombo, Gloria Holton, Lina Prince, Hank Baudet, Laurie Colombo, Joe Cantwell, Pam Sullivan, Howard Baggets, Candy Retter, Ralph Heller, Frank Forehand, Ken Cissna, Ed Sullivan, and Gilbert Treadwell.

Kneeling – Celine Melton, Mary MacEachron, Bob Brown, and Clare Sullivan. Missing – Lynn Dwyer and Millie Hughes.

Photo by Bill Buford

March Work Report, Section 5

by Barry Allen-photos courtesy of Mike Kovich and Steve Bayliss

First Things First: I want to thank all of the volunteers who continue to show up and help on monthly work days. You are an amazing bunch of people and a pleasure to work with each month. March's group of 20 volunteers was one of our largest of the year and allowed us to work two very important needs of Section 5 – tree removal and tread repair. Great turnout allows the maintenance director to plan and accomplish so much more needed work on the trail. Support this year has been amazing!

Originally the plan for March was to replace heavily decayed step treads on Section 3 just up from Little Skeenah Creek. But in response to a last-minute report of heavily damaged tread on Section 5 in the Ledford and Garland Gap areas, we shifted the work to address problems on this section of trail. After scouting the trail damage, it became apparent we also needed to run a saw crew from Wilscot Gap to the top of Tip-ton Mountain, addressing some recent blowdowns.

On Saturday, the 11th, Phil and Debra Guhl led a five person crew composed of sawyer Michael Bartell, sawyer Phil Guhl, Debra Guhl and newcomers Julie and Scott Barnstead. This group worked 1.5 miles of trail from the assembly area on FS 45 to Wilscot Gap, removing five challenging blowdowns and working to improve tread in several areas along the way. Many thanks to Julie and Scott for their interest in the BMT; we hope to have them as long term section maintainers in the very near future.



Safety instructions and plan for the day.

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Larry Dumas, who is the section maintainer (17 years and counting!!) for the BMT from Brawley Mountain to Old Dial Road, helped lead the remaining crew of 15 into Garland Gap. Our goal for the day was to repair tread in the area around Garland Gap and to de-berm trail from Brawley to Garland. The area of trail from Ledford Gap to Old Dial Road is receiving a bit of horse traffic and the need for tread repair was a result of this equine traffic around Garland Gap.

On this March day, our group of volunteers re-dug 200 yards of trail on the ascent from Garland Gap. The day turned windy and very cool with occasional sleet mixed into the equation. But the team kept working until about 1:30 or 2:00 before starting the climb back up Brawley, working trail all the way up the mountain.



Challenging mountainside work was no match for our crew.

In addition to the Barnsteads, we had two more newbies – Walker Harmon and Matt Mason. *(As an aside, some of you may place Walker Harmon as the son of John and Lisa Harmon. I am told that John, who was the mountain area reporter for the Atlanta Journal Constitution, was an important part of the BMT in its early days.)* Thanks to both Walker and Matt.

Another month of a job well done – thanks especially to Phil and Debra Guhl and Larry Dumas for helping manage the work. We will continue the re-dig on Section 5 next month (see the work announcement for April). Once again, with good turn-out, I'd like to run a saw crew through a nearby section of trail.....



As a final note, after notifying the Forest Service of problems with horses on this section, the FS is making efforts to patrol the trail more vigorously – especially areas of entry and exit. We hope to cut down dramatically on the horse presence and resulting trail degradation. Much of the digging around Garland Gap is taking the trail through black, detritus rich dirt down to a more stable clay base, thus reducing long term damage from foot (and horse) traffic.

April Work Trip Section 5 Garland Gap to Old Dial Rd

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Section 5
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, April 8, 2017
- ◆ **Meet:** 8:00 at Iron Bridge Cafe and General Store, 8436 Aska Road in Blue Ridge
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Tread repair
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum 2 liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at bmtabarry AT gmail.com or 770-294-7384

Please join the BMTA for the April trip as work is continued on Section 5 between Garland Gap and Old Dial Rd. On the last trip, about half of the work around Garland Gap was completed, leaving about 200 yards of trail to repair and re-dig.

Meet for breakfast at 8:00 at the Iron Bridge Café on Aska Road across from the Shallowford Bridge. From there we'll drive to the Old Dial Road trail access, parking most vehicles, **and taking shuttle vehicles to Wilscot Gap and then to the top of Brawley Mountain.**

Rather than duplicate the exact route of last month, we'll hike from the fire tower to Old Dial Road – a bit easier path since we won't need to walk back up Brawley at the end of the day. As always, a call or note to let me know you are coming is welcome. Hope to see you there!

Please Note: It would be helpful to have at least three or four drivers who may not be able to work for the day, but could help get volunteers from Old Dial to the top of Brawley -- about a 35 minute shuttle, and a huge help at the end of the day. Just send me a note.....



From the BMTA Scrapbook



Barry Allen 2016 Maintainer of the Year.



Hiker and friend on the BMT.



Giving the “dogs” a break on a BMT lounge chair.

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.

April

April 13th (Thursday) Green Mountain Trail

An easy/leisure hike of about four miles, with moderate elevation gain and loss. Should be a nice early spring hike, with good views of Lake Blue Ridge. We will begin at the Deep Gap trailhead on Aska Road, intersect with the Long Branch Connector and end up at the Shady Falls parking area a couple of hours later. A short shuttle of less than two miles.

For further information, contact hike leader Hank Baudet at 706-946-4318 or Geezer95 AT gmail.com.

April 23 (Sunday) Two Trail History Hike - Unicoi Turnpike Trail to Unicoi Gap, then Benton MacKaye Trail to Highway 68

Join amateur history buff and one of the BMTA founders, George Owen, for a double treat. First, we will walk the history-laden Unicoi Turnpike Trail where in parts the Cherokees walked and were then force-marched to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears. Along this 2.5-mile federally-designated National Millennium Trail, you will also visit the site of the Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Rolling Stone, a Civil War era grave of a bushwhacked man, and other sites. Then we intersect the BMT on a low ridge, walk quickly into Unicoi Gap, then turn and trek along a very mild ridge on the BMT and down to TN 68. Total hike distance is 7.4 miles and overall rating is moderate.

For further information, contact George Owen at gowen2 AT tds.net or 706-374-4716 for information.



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May

May 3rd (Wednesday) Lady Slipper Hike – BMT from Fall Branch Falls to Weaver Creek (Sections 6b, 6c, and 6d)

This hike is a moderate to strenuous 6.2 miles. After hiking less than a half mile we will pause at the ever-popular Fall Branch Falls. As we approach our lunch stop at the top of Rocky Mountain, we will find loads of trillium lining the trail. The last section of the hike takes us past several lady slipper gardens, some filled with hundreds of the beautiful pink orchid. Wild azaleas should be in bloom as well.

For more information on this hike, contact hike leader Joy Forehand at [jwfbgrg AT gmail.com](mailto:jwfbgrg@gmail.com) or call (706) 946-0336.



May 18th (Thursday) BMT - Hiwassee River to Lost Creek Campground and Back

Many hikers consider this section outstanding as it parallels Big Lost Creek through a deep limestone gorge with cascades and small waterfalls. Consider wearing water shoes as some might want to take a shortcut through the creek to the picnic tables rather than the BMT road walk to the campground picnic tables.

We'll hike to Lost Creek Campground, eat lunch and then hike back to our cars at the USFS River Access Recreation Area. You'll see the designated "National Scenic River" (the Hiwassee) as well as the historic Webb Brothers store in Reliance. The campground has picnic tables and vault toilets. Hike is 5.6 miles, easy-moderate difficulty, approximately three hours on the trail.

For more information, contact hike leader Clare Sullivan at [clare7982 AT gmail.com](mailto:clare7982@gmail.com)

May 26 (Friday) Covered Bridge to Covered Bridge on BMT in Sisson property

Using the BMT and adjacent (mostly) dirt roads, this leisurely hike will link the two covered bridges in the Sisson's Cherry Log Mountain log cabin community. Besides the bridges, we will enjoy two mountain lakes, five footbridges across cascading streams – and, with luck, a lovely stand of nodding trilliums— all in four miles of easy to moderate hiking (hills) with approximately two hours on the trail. It should be sweet. Following the hike we will repair to the Pink Pig for lunch.

For further information, contact hike leaders Tom and Jane Keene at [tkbmta AT gmail.com](mailto:tkbmta@gmail.com) or 770-548-4935 (text ok).

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