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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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AUGUST 2021

Nuts and Bolts of Bridge Repair An Awesome Responsibility

by Joy Forehand with Bob Cowdrick - Photos courtesy of Clare Sullivan and Richard Parks

Thunder Rock Bridge

The Thunder Rock Bridge, located near the Thunder Rock Campground in Tennessee, has been an issue in need of action for some time. In December 2019, a flood left the bridge slick and listing at a 20° angle. It was too dangerous to use to cross the drainage ditch and the Forest Service (FS) closed the bridge.

The FS recently approved a more rustic, wilderness-style bridge for the replacement. With the help of the Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) crew, the old bridge was removed July 26, 2021.

Situated about eight-feet closer to the river, hikers now walk across a single log with a railing -- anchored to the bank with metal anchors. To avoid flooding the new bridge is positioned a bit higher above the ditch. It has a 10-foot span – 10-feet less than the 20-foot span of the old bridge. The 6x6s that were used to shore up the old bridge were removed and will be used for stair replacement on Section 11e. When the crew dug out the support, they added more dirt to the drainage. Three commercial stepping-stones (courtesy of the campground) also were installed.

Leaning trees in the area have been removed. A near-by Hemlock was cut and delimbed. A contractor was brought in to plane the log. The Hemlock was put in place and now serves as the bridge deck. Last, but not least, a railing was added.

“I’m glad we decided to go for that single log stringer style,” said Mason Boring, Acting Ocoee-Hiwassee Recreation Manager. “It’s consistent with the primitive nature that much of the BMT offers. We also simply don’t need a wider bridge for that section ... plus single log bridges are just old-school cool IMO.”



Many thanks to Trail Techs Mason Boring (Ocoee District) and Gray Buckles (Tellico District); Greg Kirkland, acting Ocoee District Recreation Manager and to the YCC volunteers without whom this project never could have been completed -- in just two weeks!

Swinging Bridge

Built in 1977, the iconic Swinging Bridge over the Toccoa River is 268 feet across. It is an impressive architectural structure. But it's far more than just something to look at. During the spring, summer and fall months, the bridge attracts over 200 visitors each weekend. Fathers are fascinated with the architectural design. Mothers, especially of small children, are thankful there's an easy way to cross the river. And the kids ... well, they just love making the bridge swing and sway.

The esthetics and beauty aside, the 502 planks, 106 railing posts, railing boards, innumerable nuts and bolts as well as the cement anchors that make up the bridge require regular maintenance.

"Maintaining the bridge is an awesome responsibility," said BMTA's Georgia Maintenance Director Bob Cowdrick. "As they jump and run and swing side to side, kids can be pretty rough on the bridge. The motion can loosen the nuts and bolts that hold the bridge together. A few bolts may even lose their nuts, bounce out of the holes and fall into the water below. The weather takes a toll on the wooden planks and railing as well," Cowdrick concluded.

Mark Yost and Phil Guhl, the BMT Section Maintainers for the bridge, check the bridge twice/year. A more detailed annual inspection is conducted by BMTA in February. Missing or loose nuts and bolts, loose cables, overhanging trees and the condition of cement anchors are noted for future repair/replacement.

"It's really a challenging job," said Yost. "We have to lift up some of the bridge planks and remove them so we can access the bolts on the bridge stringers. It's a critical job to make sure the bridge remains intact and safe for everyone to use."

Thru hiker Sarah Sundstrum of Fairbanks, Alaska, definitely appreciated the well-maintained bridge. Although Sundstrum was aware of a bridge, she still was apprehensive about using a suspension bridge to cross the Toccoa River. To her amazement she found a "real" bridge supported by cables with large concrete anchors and decked across with planks.

As Sundstrum crossed the bridge, a BMTA crew (Cowdrick, Yost, Gilbert Treadwell, Ed Sullivan and Steve Pruett) were replacing loose nuts and bolts as well as checking for any other repairs that may be needed in the near future. She thanked the crew saying, "I'm so glad you maintain this bridge. I was a little surprised this beautiful bridge was here -- I'm so glad I won't have to get my feet wet."



Long Creek Footbridge

The Georgia Maintenance Team recently replaced the 36-foot long Long Creek Footbridge.

A popular trail for day hikers, 100% of the hikers that morning pitched in to help carry the lumber and materials 1.1 miles uphill to the construction area!

Crews on the January work trip installed the stringers and 108 planks. Yet another crew in February installed the rails (curbs) on the walkway and a group of trail workers returned later to add the finishing touch -- non-slip shingles.



Fall Campout

Fall Creek Falls State Park

Pikeville, TN

September 12-16, 2021

BMTA and the Cherokee Hiking Club are sponsoring a Campout at Fall Creek Falls State Park. Hike each day, Monday – Thursday. Reserve your campsite now. Rick and Brenda Harris will be in campsite A30. You also can reserve a room in the lodge (if open by then — it's being rebuilt) or reserve a cabin. They go quickly!

- ◆ **September13** (Monday) we will hike trails at the State Park.
- ◆ **September14** (Tuesday) we will hike to Virgin Falls. A rather unique 110' waterfall coming out of a cave!
- ◆ **September15** (Wednesday) we will hike at Burgess Falls. Four impressive waterfalls cascade down 250' — the most spectacular of which is the last 130' falls that plunges into a deep gorge.
- ◆ **September16** (Thursday) we will hike to Cummins Falls and swim below the falls (online permit required). The rock features abutting the waterfall creates a stadium-effect for the beautiful falls that ends in an inviting swimming hole.



To sign up, contact Hike Leader Rick and Brenda Harris,
harrisri@aol.com or [Sign Up Online](#).

2021 BMTA Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

[2021 Hike Fest Schedule](#)



Featured Speaker



Larry Anderson

Author of Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape).

For reservations call 800-573-9659.
To receive your discount, use Code 99529!
Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!



Larry Anderson

Author of *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape)*



Larry Anderson, freelance writer and independent scholar is the author of two of the most authoritative books written about Benton MacKaye -- *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail (Creating the North American Landscape)* and *Peculiar Work: Writing about Benton MacKaye, Conservation, Community*.

Anderson's experiences throughout his youth laid the groundwork for the books. He grew up in rural Massachusetts, a short distance from Benton MacKaye's home in Shirley, Massachusetts. Anderson never had the pleasure of meeting MacKaye, but like MacKaye, the simplistic, natural beauty of the surrounding countryside became indelibly etched in Anderson's mind and formed the basis for his life-long love for the outdoors.

Anderson graduated from Harvard with a degree in Anthropology – the same college where MacKaye spent his undergraduate and graduate years. Anderson was especially influenced by landscape historian J. B. Jackson's unique ways of observing the commonplace as well as the writings of American historian and "philosopher of technology" Lewis Mumford. At this time, Anderson also began to explore the northern New England countryside – as MacKaye had done decades before.

Anderson graduated at the height of the counterculture revolution – the 1960s-70s when the laid-back hippie lifestyle and environmentalism reigned supreme. Like many of this generation, the practicality of embarking on a traditional career was not a priority. Instead, he took a job in a sawmill. The return to life in a rural setting reminded him of the picturesque landscapes he so admired as a youth. It also heightened his awareness of the need to protect the environment.

"I learned a lot from the man who ran the sawmill, and his brother," Anderson recounted. "This was not book learning. They were good stewards of the lands and resources. More than once, as we were cutting down what looked to me like quite old trees, he mentioned that he had previously harvested similar trees on the same spot decades earlier. Thus, I learned something about the possibilities for sustainability resource uses and what can take place on the landscape during one person's lifetime."

Anderson soon found that keeping up with the 75-year-old logger was difficult – even for a fit, young man in his 20s. Anderson left to become a journalist at a newspaper in rural Massachusetts.

Later, as a freelance writer, he was ready for a new endeavor. Given his life-long love of the outdoors, enthusiasm for protecting the environment and fascination with Benton MacKaye, Anderson was ready to delve into researching and writing about the life of Benton MacKaye – not as an historian writing about historical facts, but as a journalist describing and making MacKaye's visionary concepts come alive, not only to scholars, but to inquisitive day hikers as well.

Anderson accomplished his goals. His research and descriptions are meticulous – as are the myriad of pictures of MacKaye’s precisely detailed hand-drawn maps. In the book, Anderson lays out MacKaye’s visions for the preservation and enjoyment of the environment -- many of these concepts can be identified today as: green-spaces, the intrastate and interstate highway systems, designated wilderness areas protected from urban encroachment and the movement for environmental sustainability.

Anderson’s first book, *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 2002. Available on [Amazon](#).

His second book, *Peculiar Work: Writing about Benton MacKaye, Conservation, Community* was published by Quicksand Chronicles in 2012. Available on [Amazon](#).

Going down a bit of a different path, his latest project is *The Sheriff’s Tale: A Mostly True Chronicle of Early Las Vegas*).

--Larry Anderson
-- *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail*
(*Creating the North American Landscape*)
--Wikipedia

Don’t miss Larry Anderson’s presentation at the Awards Banquet, November 13 at Unicoi Lodge!

"Putting Match to the Fuse": Benton MacKaye and the Creation of American Hiking Trails"

He will tie together stories of the Benton MacKaye Trail, Appalachian Trail, the Bay Circuit Trail and others.

And, if you have one of Larry Anderson’s books, bring it to the meeting for

Saturday nite’s book signing event.

Don’t have a copy yet, get yours on Amazon!

[*Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail*](#)

[*Peculiar Work: Writing about Benton MacKaye, Conservation, Community*](#)



Working, Working, Working!!

by Bob Cowdrick with photos from Kelly Wentworth and Bob Cowdrick

Thunder showers, motorcycles and brushcutters – What do they have in common? They make for an interesting day on the BMT.

If you were lucky enough to be with Barry Allen's crew, you escaped the rain while on the trail. If you were with Bob Cowdrick, Dave Ricker and Darcy Douglas, you felt the raindrops! The forecast was for afternoon showers, but the forecasters missed the mark by a few hours.

Barry, led by Nelson Ashbrook on his motorcycle, explored FS329 as access to the middle of Section 3. Add a short, steep bushwhack and you pop out on Section 3b. The blowdown they were after is gone and the trail has been brushed back. Future hikers will appreciate that. Not to let a good opportunity go to waste, they took out another blowdown on Section 4a.



Continued next page

Bob's crew returned to Section 6d to finish the work from last month. Frank Forehand led the crew to the diversions that he scouted earlier in the week. The 12 water diversions were cleaned out before and after Scoggin Knob. Thunder was the signal to turn back after completing the last diversion— just in time to put the diversions to use.



Hmm.... Good thing they are wearing some official logos, or a hiker might run screaming in the other direction. "Wild men with weapons loose upon the woods!"

Dave's brushcutting crew worked Section 8h. Two trees are gone and one mile of brushing done. Dave said they had a great crew and pushed to get the work completed before becoming completely soaked.

Darcy's blazing crew got a raincheck. Rain and wet trees do not hold fresh paint very well. Not to put a good day to waste, they hiked the trail up to Flat Top to see what blazing would be needed on the next trip. She informs me she has a plan to finish the job.

Gilbert Treadwell and Mike Pilvinsky worked Sections 1b and 1c and got three miles of string trimming. If three miles is not enough, why not trim out the Big Stamp parking lot? Got that done also!

The numbers are:

- 1.5 miles of brush cutting
- 3 miles of string-trimming
- 4 trees removed
- 12 water diversions
- 26 members attending
- 173 volunteer hours

Our next workday will be August 14, 2021 when we will focus our efforts on Section 8 – Bushy Head Gap to Dyer Gap.

2021 BMTA Annual Meeting

Raffle



Unicoi Lodge
2 Nite Stay



Fontana Village
2 Nite Stay



Fireside Outpost
2 Nite Stay



Hike Inn
1 Nite Stay

Proceeds go to
BMTA's
Land Acquisition Fund

Tickets
\$10 each or 3 for \$25
Tickets available
at the meeting!



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What is wrong with this picture? We used to have a sign here!! Stolen!!!! Boo Hiss!!

BMT Section 15b Waucheesi Bald to Six Mile Gap and Tate Gap

by Lydia Martinez photos courtesy of Rick Harris

Fourteen maintainers came to volunteer at the hazy and humid July work trip. This trip was originally scheduled to be at the Heart of Darkness, but last month's work trip conquered it in addition to their scheduled section. Therefore, this Saturday we worked the section from Waucheesi Bald to Tate Gap, which is the site of the old Doc Rogers' homestead. This section was originally scheduled to be worked last winter but was cancelled due to heavy rains.

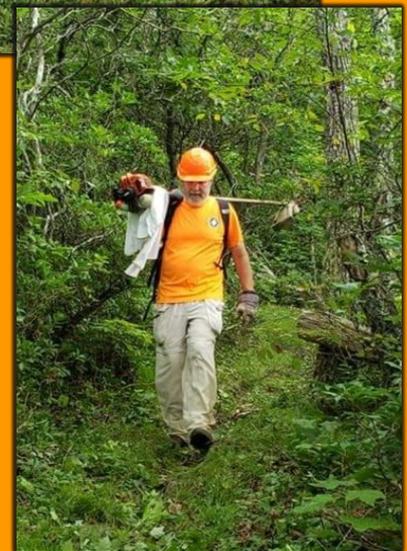
The Georgia crew, led by Barry Allen and his saw, arrived at Waucheesi Bald earlier than the Tennessee crew and hiked to the end of the 1.8-mile BMT section (plus the 0.6 approach trail). They then turned around and started brushing out the trail from Tate Gap towards Waucheesi.

The Tennessee crew arrived and started brushing out from Waucheesi towards Tate Gap. The two teams met in the middle and then hiked out together. One blowdown was logged out along with some snags. The Tennessee crew located the spring down from Six Mile Gap, brushed out the side trail, and dug a dipping hole in the spring to make water collection easier for hikers.

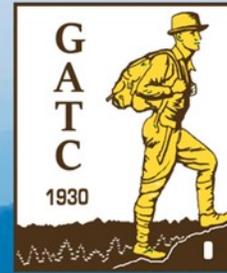


After hiking out, the volunteers enjoyed cool drinks, brownies and watermelon kindly provided by the Harris's.

Participants included Richard and Brenda Harris, Lydia and Josh Martinez, Ed and Clare Sullivan, Nelson Ashbrook, David Blount, Barry Allen, Patrick Ward, Joe Cantwell, Andy Meeks, Bill Balke and Steve Bayliss.



Trail Skills Workshop Lake Winfield Scott, GA September 25 - 26, 2021



Registration is Open!!!!

Make plans to attend the annual **Trail Skills Workshop at Lake Winfield Scott September 25 – 26, 2021**. This will be a great event, with beautiful weather, to learn skills and reconnect with old friends and make some new ones.

Join experts of Rock Work, Mechanical Advantage and Trail Work in this weekend of learning and experience. This will be an outstanding opportunity to explore the latest in trail building and maintenance techniques.

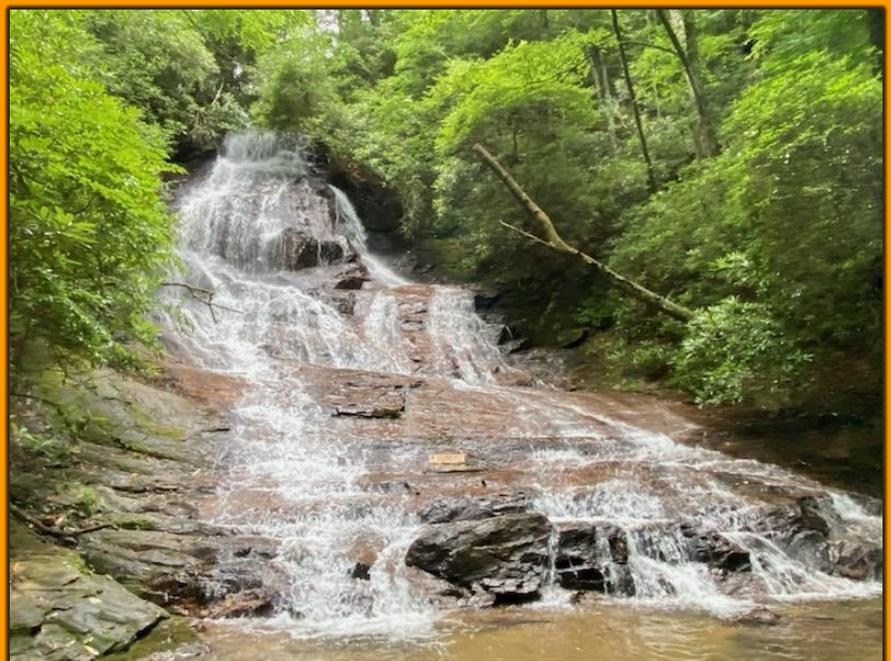
In addition, there will be short presentations on Orienteering and Crosscut Sawyering Saturday afternoon.

If you can't make the whole weekend, plan to come for the Saturday afternoon session and dinner. The fee is \$30.00 which includes all the courses, dinner, two nights camping and a T-shirt!

For more information and to register go to <https://forms.gle/5GBSMz5fdKuYnVy1A>, direct questions to tsw@georgia-atclub.org.

Double the Delight!!!

by Steve Dennison with photos courtesy of Connie Nester



Nine miles of hiking on the July Wildcat hike to find two stunning waterfalls! On the left is Buice Falls and on the right is Fall Creek Falls, also known as Ammons Falls. You can look closely and see that a plaque with the name of the falls is on the rocks.

Talona Ridge RV Resort Grand Opening

by Joy Forehand

The BMTA Information Tent was at the Grand Opening of the Talona Ridge RV Resort held July 17-18, 2021, at the Talona Ridge RV Resort in Ellijay.

Although sunny blue skies did prevail at times, the frequent bouts of rain put a damper on the event. Nevertheless, BMTA volunteers chatted with attendees garnering sign-ups and three memberships -- new member, Bill Balke, was on the July 24 Tennessee Work Trip!

Thank you to our group of knowledgeable and enthusiastic volunteers – Sharon and Tom Atcheson, Joy and Frank Forehand, Steve Pruett, Carolyn and Tom Sewell, Gilbert Treadwell, Mark Yost and Vicki Yunker!



Join Now!

Use this link to become a BMTA member:

Membership

Cartecay Loop Hike

by Ken Cissna



The weather was iffy but seven of us (and two dogs) decided to take our chances and were rewarded with a very nice four-mile loop hike, mostly along the Cartecay River southeast of Ellijay.

Weather was overcast with moderate temperatures but no rain.

Hikers on this July 12 hike included Pat and Judy Iverson, Gay Reed, Nancy Sauls, Penny Strickland, Gilbert Treadwell and hike leader Ken Cissna. Gay and I brought our dogs on this dog-friendly hike, Gay's Lily and my Artie.



Hudson Gap to Fowler Mountain - Out and Back

by Ken Cissna with photos courtesy of Andrew Linker

July 16th, six of us drove the bumpy Forest Service Road 793 from Bushy Head Gap to Hudson Gap where we left our cars. This hike was co-sponsored by Georgia Forest Watch (GFW). Andrew Linker, Outreach Coordinator for GFW, was co-leading the hike. When we arrived at Hudson Gap, I was surprised to find long-time GFW member and “forest watcher” David Govus there ahead of us. I’d met him casually on a couple of GFW Zoom meetings earlier in the year. Our crew consisted of Nancy Kennell, Terry Stewart, Tom and Bev Ottinger, Hike Leaders Andrew Linker and Ken Cissna, and my hiking dog Artie. We left David to his forest watching work and headed NOBO on the BMT. We met up with David again at McKenny Gap. Terry and I turned back a little early, and at David’s request walked the old logging road from McKenny to Hudson as part of our return trip. I could report to him that no one had been on it with a four-wheeler or any other sort of vehicle. This was in part due to the significant number of downed trees, though I do think a bear preceded us a day or two earlier along most of our route. The others got to Fowler Mountain and returned, completing about 7.8 miles.



BMTA Corporate Members

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is grateful for the help and support provided by our Corporate Members. When you visit one of these businesses, please identify yourself as a BMTA member and be sure to thank them for their support!



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WILDWOOD MAGIC

Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Tom Sewell, Hiking Director

Guidelines for Our Hikes

Because hiking in the outdoors is good for one's mental and physical health, we encouraged BMTA members and others to continue hiking during the COVID-19 health crisis *and to do so safely*. Thus, we continued our hiking program during 2020 and 2021.

Due to the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, we have further modified our hiking program:

- ◆ We have resumed allowing shuttle hikes but caution that (a) no hikers should ride with another or have another ride with them if they are concerned about their safety and (b) unvaccinated hikers should not assume that others will want to ride in vehicles with them.
- ◆ Carpooling is permitted but not required.
- ◆ Any potential hiker who is feeling ill or has been exposed recently to a person with an active case of COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
- ◆ Hikes are limited to a maximum of 10 participants in Tennessee and North Carolina and 12 participants in Georgia. Hike leaders may impose lower limits.
- ◆ Masks are optional, but hikers should maintain an appropriate distance from one another.

August



August 14 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 8 a, b, c, d. Logout, brushout and tread repair.

For more information contact Bob Cowdrick GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org.

August 16 (Monday) Emery Creek. Moderate 5 miles. The trail for this in-and-out hike is fairly easy, but 26 stream crossings (a number up to your ankles and two around your knees) and a section of potentially slippery rock toward the beginning and again at the end make it more difficult than it otherwise would be. Holly and Emery Creeks, two lovely waterfalls and a beautiful trail make it worth the trouble. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

August 16 (Monday) Cohutta Wilderness. Benton MacKaye, Hemp Top and Jacks River Trails. We will start hiking from Watson Gap, enter the Cohutta Wilderness on the BMT, then use the Hemp Top and Jack's River Trails to complete a circle and return over a 2.6 repeat of the BMT to Watson Gap again. About 8.3 miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

August 20 (Friday) Cohutta Wilderness. Benton MacKaye and Jacks River Trails in the Cohutta Wilderness. Moderate 8-mile hike through forest of hemlocks and rhododendrons. Requires a 5-mile drive on a USFS road to Dally Gap. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

August 20 (Friday) BMT from Reliance, TN, to the Lost Creek Campground and back, 8 miles. This hike parallels the beautiful Big Lost Creek through a deep limestone gorge with rippling cascades and lovely waterfalls. The rating is moderate due to the length of the hike, only two hills. We'll cross the cool creek to eat lunch at the campground. Water shoes are a must for three creek crossings both ways. We'll return a slightly different trail with magnificent views of rock formations. There's ice cream at the Hiwassee Outfitters store at the end of the hike. Hike Leader Clare Sullivan. For more information contact hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org.

August 27 (Friday) BMT Highway 515 to Weaver Creek and return. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy 5 miles. Mostly along dirt roads. Two "rock hopping" stream crossings could get your feet wet depending on stream levels and recent rainfall.

Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



August 28 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Section 13e. Annual logout and refresh blazes. For more information contact Steve Bayliss, stevebayliss801@gmail.com.

August 28 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Section 13d. Annual logout and refresh blazes. For more information contact Anne Anderson, ahander@aol.com or Mary Alton Altongd@aim.com.

August 30 (Monday) Amadahy trail at Carter's Lake. Easy/moderate 4-5-miles if you go out to the "boat/hike campground." This will be a leisurely hike. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

September

September 10 (Friday) Gahuti Lite: Five Intersecting Trails Loop at Fort Mountain State Park. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). About 5 moderate miles. Highlights include cascading creeks, a long-distance view and a lakeside walk. Ends with a moderate uphill walk. Hike leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



September 11 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 8 e, f, g, h. Logout, brushout and tread repair. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org.

September 12-17 (Sunday-Friday) Campout at Fall Creek Falls State Park. Hike each day, Monday – Thursday. Reserve your campsite now. Rick and Brenda Harris will be in campsite A30. You may also opt to reserve a room in the lodge if open by then (being rebuilt) or reserve a cabin. They go quickly.

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September 16 (Thursday) we will hike to Cummins Falls and swim below the falls (online permit required).

Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris harrisri@aol.com. Note: Joint BMTA and Cherokee Hiking Club event.



September 25 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Section 16c-d. Annual logout and refresh blazes. For more information contact Rick Harris harrisri@aol.com.

Beaver People

by Kathy Williams



There is a mystery on Section 7a of the Benton MacKaye. The elusive “Beaver People” have been trying to build a dam on a small sliver of a stream close to the Weaver Creek Trailhead. More and more wooden objects have been dragged to this small stream which is in a boggy area. So now, instead of an easy step through the stream, this area is becoming damned and the area is becoming even more boggy. Who are these people? Perhaps people who dreamt as a child of having the “Super Powers of Beavers”? Only the Shadow knows.

The deadline for the September Newsletter is Wednesday, September 1. Thank you!