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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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If You're Looking for a Good New Year's Resolution...

by Ken Cissna

If you're in need of a New Year's resolution that might do you or someone else some good, you might take a look at the safety equipment you take with you and the safety precautions you practice when you're out hiking. I'm sure we could all do a little better.

You might think that's not really necessary for you—it's true that almost every hike is uneventful. Given all the rocks and roots on the trails as well as the slippery conditions we sometimes hike in I am sometimes surprised that we hikers don't fall more often. But even if you hike only on well-traveled, close-in, and relatively easy trails, the unexpected can happen. Yes, such events are rare, but things do happen on the trail—even on the well-known Hike Inn Trail from Amicalola Falls State Park to the beautiful Hike Inn back-country lodge or the Flat Creek Loop Trail off Aska Road south of Blue Ridge, both relatively easy and about five miles long.

The day after Christmas this year, we were on the home stretch at Flat Creek Loop when we came across EMTs bringing out a dazed-appearing hiker. When we got to our cars, we found the parking lot completely obstructed by five EMT vehicles of various kinds. I counted eight emergency personnel. The hiker was loaded into the ambulance fairly quickly and they departed. I hope and trust he was okay.

Sometimes it's worse. The Hike Inn reported that two people died hiking the Hike Inn Trail this year.

I don't know that anything I or anyone else would say about trail safety would have helped in any of these instances—but it might have.

What's the most important thing to ensure your safety and the safety of others? I suspect there is no one thing that's universally most important. I remember the Boy Scout motto from my early days of hiking and camping: "Be Prepared." Since then, I've learned this: Assuming everything is going to go right isn't preparing at all. Preparing means thinking about *what could go wrong* and figuring out how to avoid or deal with that.

Fortunately, you don't have to figure this out for yourself. Numerous lists are available of what you should bring on every hike. Google "ten essentials for hiking." (I have no idea why ten, but there almost always are.) The lists tend to be organized by function: What do you need to find your way should you become lost (maybe a map and compass and knowing how to use them)? What do you need to stay warm and dry in unexpected weather (perhaps rain gear, solar blanket, an extra jacket, and dry socks [which can double as gloves])?

What do you need if you're out longer than you expect, even overnight (how about extra food and water, a method to purify water, any essential medications, a headlamp or flashlight [with extra batteries])? What do you need if you or someone you're with is injured (a good first aid kit)?

An expert kayaker I once hiked with told me that kayakers always go out with at least two others—so a minimum group of three. I asked why and added that I almost never hike alone and feel pretty secure hiking with one other friend. The kayaker explained, “One holds your head above water while the other goes for help.” I still often hike with one other friend, and only very rarely hike alone, but the kayaker's advice is good for hikers, too: One to staunch the bleeding or keep you conscious while the other goes for help. And please keep in mind, hiking alone is always risky.

This isn't a complete list by any means—and there's no single, perfect set of supplies. It's going to vary somewhat by the hike and the hiker. You can find a lot of good ideas in the most recent book by avid hiker and BMTA's Georgia Maintenance Director, Bob Cowdrick. Aptly titled *Trail Tales: 100 Tools, Tips, and Techniques to Improve Your Hiking Experience*, it includes his own list of the ten essentials (though I'd want to add a whistle, something I used only once on the trail, a couple of years ago, but to good effect) and 99 other useful ideas. You can find it on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Doing a little more hiking this year or helping BMTA out with a few more hours of maintenance might be great resolutions for many of us, but being better prepared to hike *safely* would surely benefit us all in the year to come.

My very best wishes for a much-improved 2021.

Looking Forward to Crosscutting Without COVID Masks!





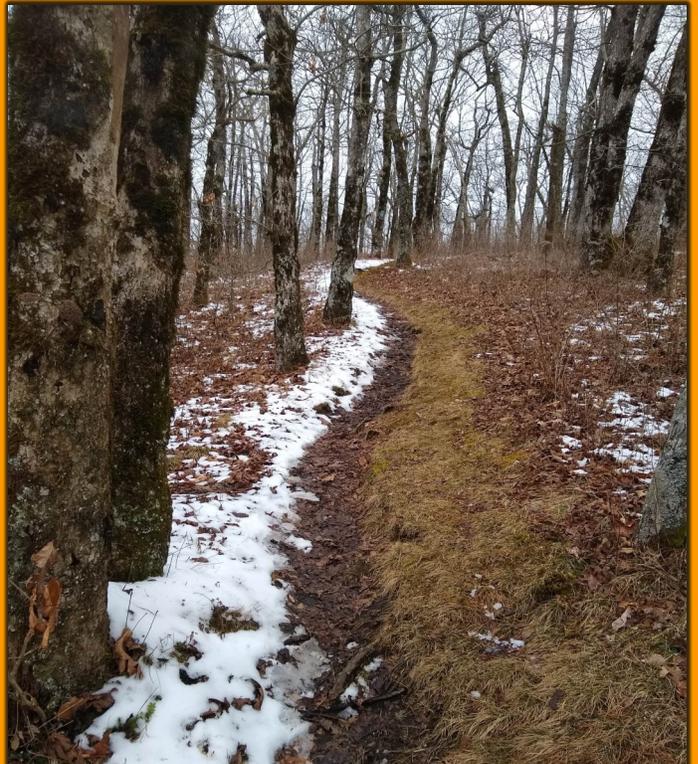
Join or Renew Your BMTA Membership Today!
Leave a footpath for generations to follow.

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Santa of the Woods!
Photo by Steve Pruett.



Hike to Kelly Knob with Christmas snow still visible.
Photo by Steve Dennison.

Picaroons and Silkies! What Fun!

Photos by Clare Sullivan



**Wilderness Wildlife Week Returns
February 1-5, 2021**

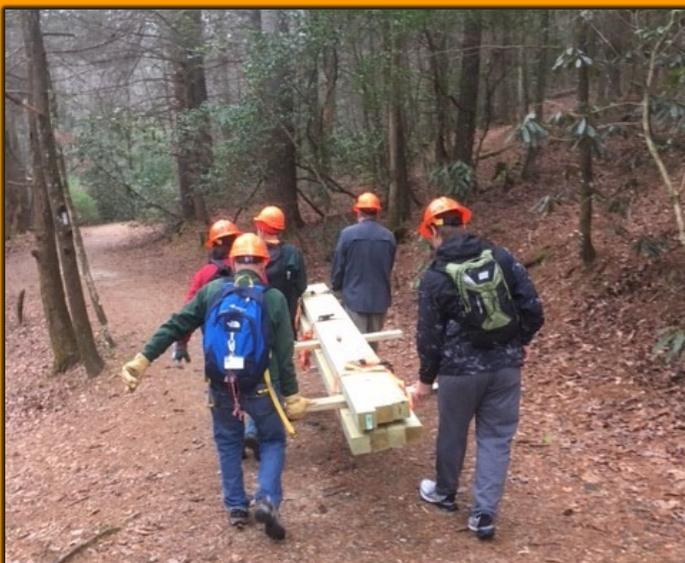
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GA Work Trip - Three Forks Boardwalk Renovation

by Bob Cowdrick

The theme of our December 12 work trip was "Don't Go Empty Handed" and none of our 35 members and guests went empty handed!

As 9 AM was getting closer, I was becoming concerned that Lynette Lynn and I would be the only attendees. Unknown to us, Gilbert, Barry, Dave and others had already spent over an hour cutting out the 25-foot tree blocking FS58 from Doublehead Gap Road. Behind them was a line of BMTA cars waiting patiently to get to the Three Forks trailhead.



Post welcoming, job description, safety briefing and job hazard discussion four crews grabbed tools, lumber and supplies -- no one left the trailhead empty handed.

The hike to the Long Creek Bridge is a steady uphill climb of 1.1 miles.

Shortly after, some members returned with old lumber and wanted to take another load to the jobsite.

Continued next page

Members of the public who were planning on hiking to Long Creek Falls, were offered the opportunity to participate in the project by carrying a piece of lumber to the site. With very little encouragement from us 100% of those asked agreed to help and some expressed an interest in joining us on future workdays.



Thank you "Random Stranger Hikers"!



We were able to wrap-up Saturday's effort without the predicted rainstorm. Most importantly, the boardwalk looks fantastic and will be safer for hikers to travel on. We invested a total of over 309 hours to make this project a success!

Patrick and Cindy Ward, who are members of the Thrivent Action Team, sponsored our lunch. Thrivent is a wonderful financial services company whose motto is "Give Generously." Thank you Patrick and Cindy!

Save the date of January 9th, 2021, when we will be working on Section 1.

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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Save the Dates!

November 12-14, 2021

BMTA Hike Fest and Annual Meeting

Unicoi Lodge - Helen, GA

For reservations call (800) 573-9659.

To receive your discount -

Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!

TN BMTA Work Trip Sections 12a-b Kimsey Hwy to Ocoee River

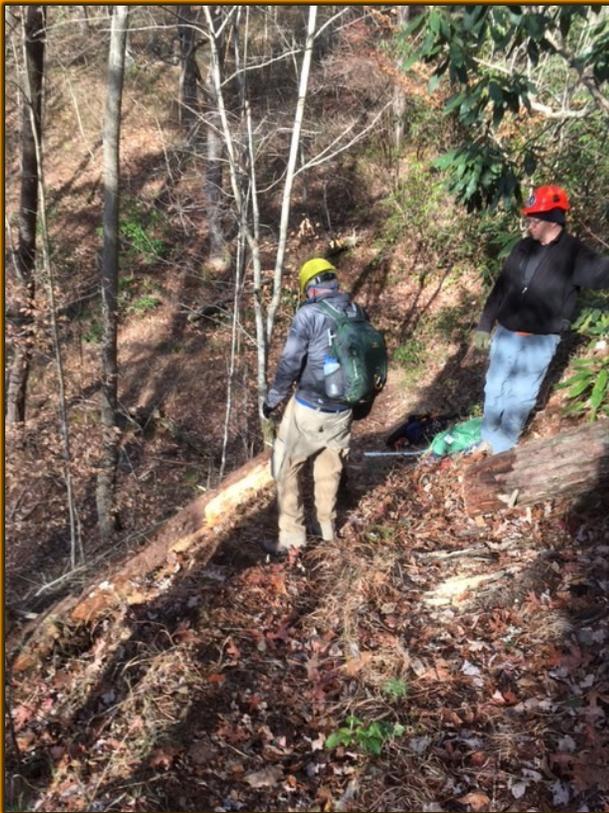
by Richard Harris

Nineteen volunteers showed up for this work trip on the cool, clear, Saturday before Christmas. We broke into five groups to be COVID-19 safe and to get all the work done as planned.

One group, headed by Bob Cowdrick started from the Ocoee River crossing and went uphill on the Dry Pond Lead section with crosscut saws, swingblades and loppers. They cut out several trees and met the group led by Barry Allen coming from the Rock Creek Trail intersection.

The third group, led by Ken Jones, went north from the Wilderness sign on the Dry Pond Lead Trail to Deep Gap with crosscut and brushing tools.

The fourth group, led by Rick Harris worked from Kimsey Highway south to Deep Gap with crosscut saw and brushing tools. A fifth group, led by Ed and Clare Sullivan, worked around Deep Gap and then transported folks in the bed of their truck back to their vehicles at the end of the day. We all enjoyed cookies and refreshments before leaving for home.



This six-plus mile section of the trail is completely logged out and mostly brushed out.

There is one section on the upper part of the Dry Pond Lead Trail which still needs to be brushed out.





Railroads brought timber from the mountain forests into Tellico Plains.

A total of 19 trees were cut off the trail, including three which were essentially blocking the trail, forcing hikers to make a detour around the deadfall.

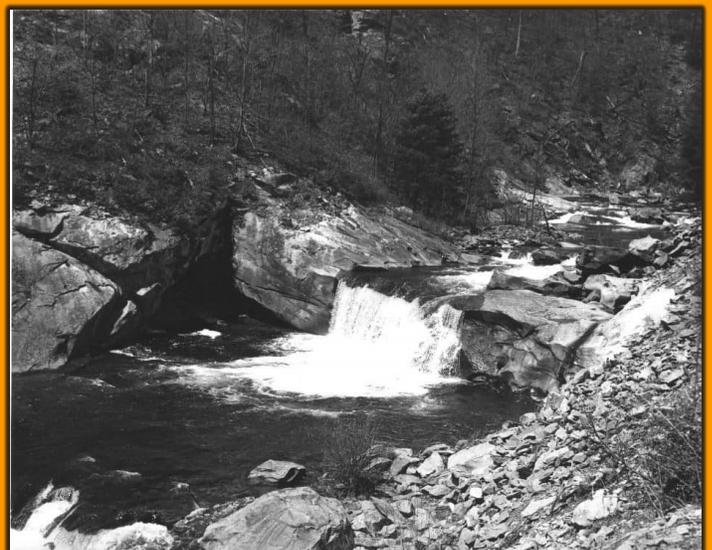
There are some areas outside of Wilderness in need of blaze refreshing, which will be done soon.

I dug out some photos from the “Olden Times” of this area of Bald River Falls and Baby Falls back in the logging days – an interesting contrast.

Once again, thanks to the Georgia folks who came up to help us out!



A railroad at the top of Bald River Falls removed logs from the forest.



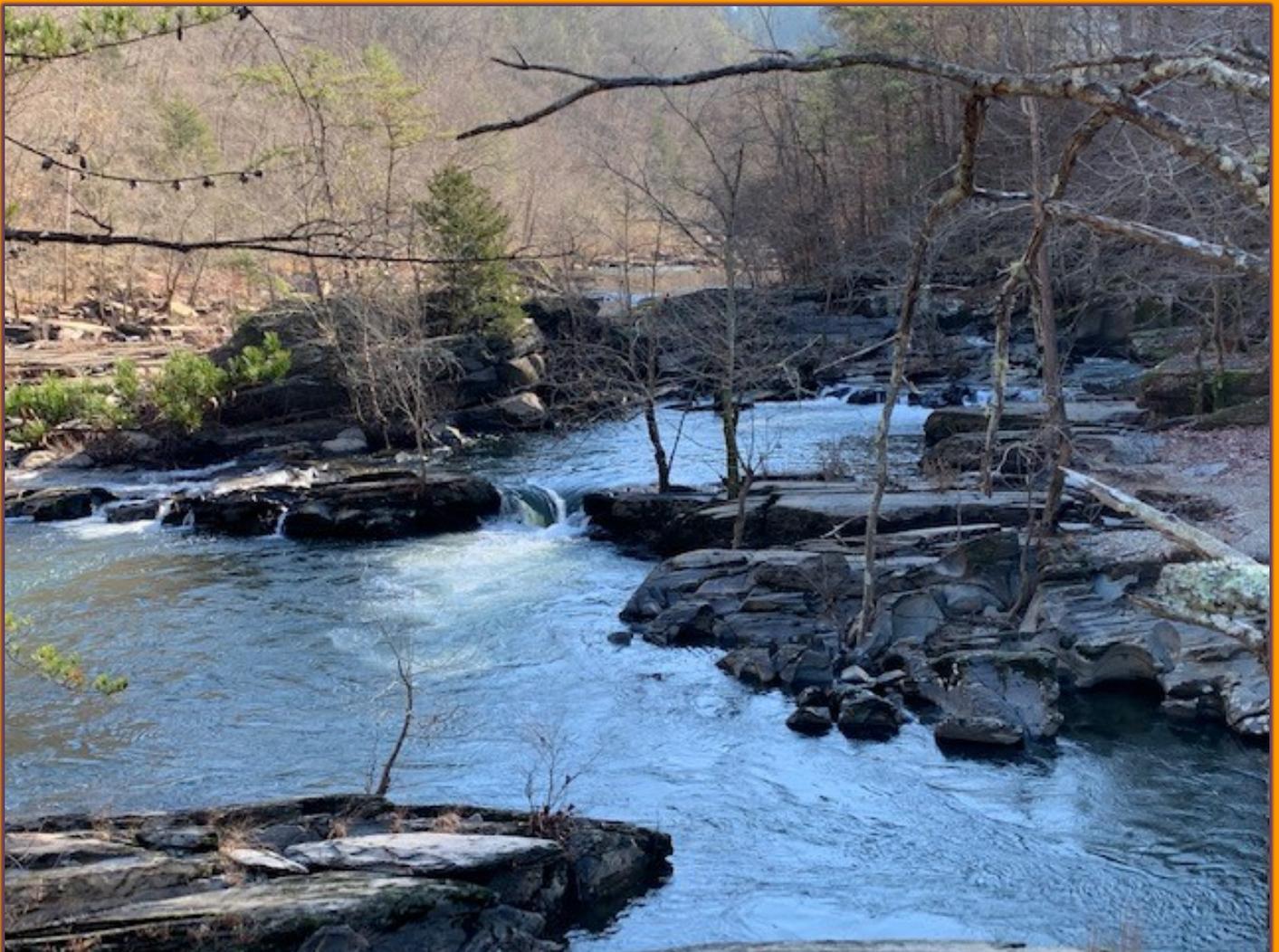
Third Time's the Charm!

By Hike Leaders Clare Sullivan and Judy Price

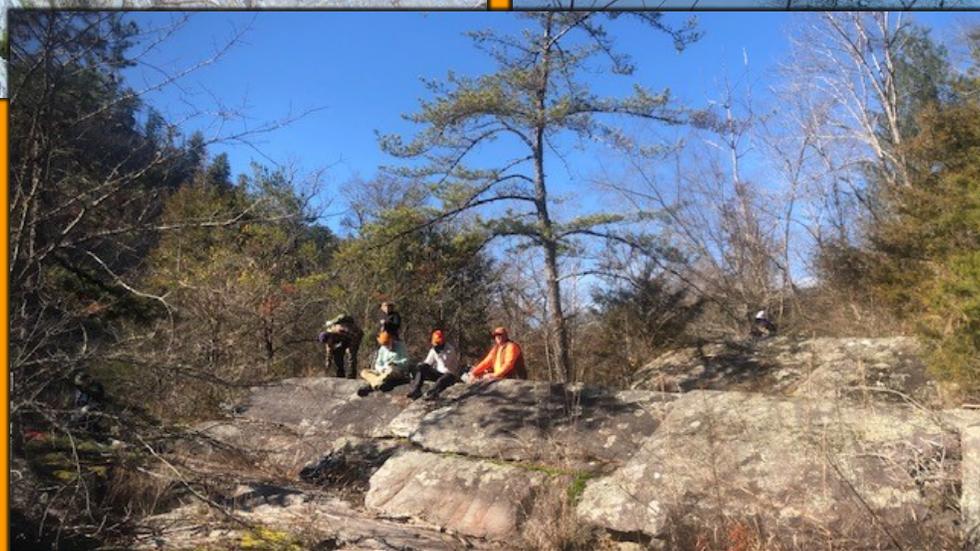
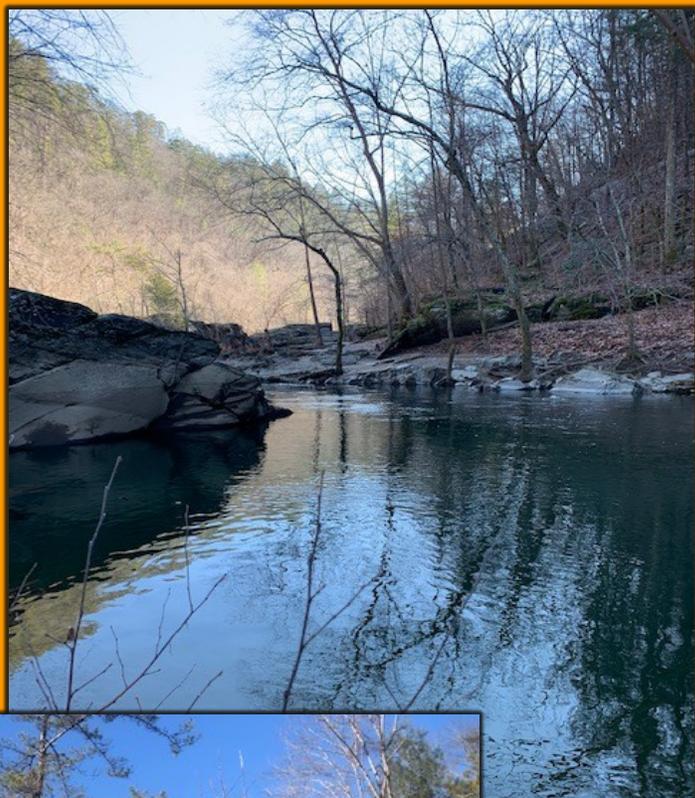
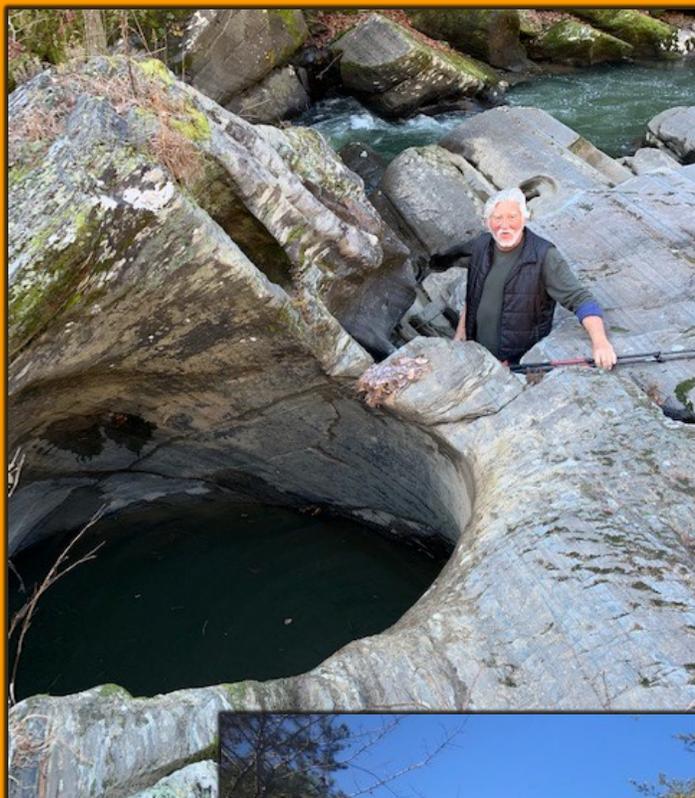
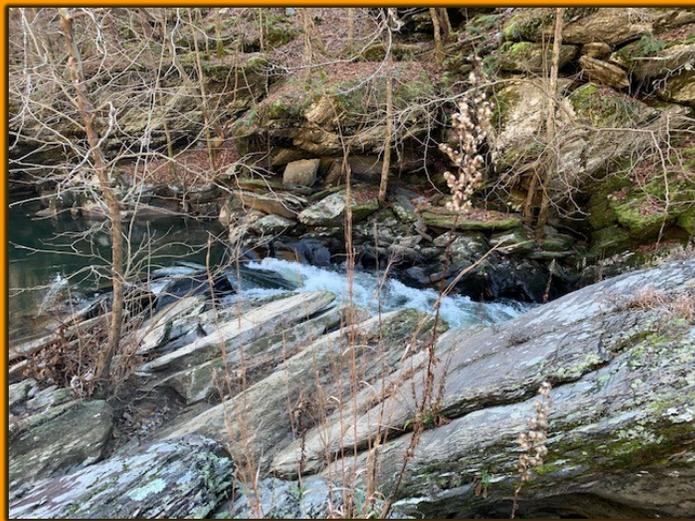
The third time the BMTA hike to The Narrows was scheduled, it was successful! Our first scheduled hike was cancelled due to rain. Tropical Storm Eta had passed through the day before the second scheduled hike. Water was being released from the Appalachian Dam making it impossible to reach The Narrows.

Eureka! Friday, December 18, 2020, we made it! We reached the gorgeous, most narrow point of the Hiwassee River in Tennessee. This beautiful view is just 50 yards off the BMT. Some hikers sat and enjoyed the beautiful scenery. Larry, Melissa and Clare went exploring on the boulders in the gorge. They found the huge hole carved by twirling rocks when water is being released. Such a fun, gorgeous day in the Cherokee National Forest!

Our hikers were: Melissa Crabtree, Sue Ford, Martha Fowler, Larry Jarkovsky, Judy Price, Tom and Carolyn Sewell, Ed and Clare Sullivan and Doug and Evelin Yarns. It was Melissa's first hike with the BMTA. We hope she comes back for more adventures.



Continued next page



Three Forks Southbound for the Lower Two Loops

by Ken Cissna



Jane Harrison and Ken Cissna crossing a creek on the AT.

“Artie Cissna” and his new four-footed friend, “Bryson Paul”, took their humans, Susan Paul, me and “dog less” BMTA members Jane Harrison, Mike Pilvinsky and Tom Sewell to the two lower loops between Springer Mountain and Three Forks.

We went up the Appalachian Trail, stopping briefly at the Stover Creek Shelter.

As planned, we stopped at the second intersection between the AT and BMT, just a quarter of a mile from the Springer Mountain parking lot.

We lunched at the campsite before returning on the BMT.

It was a great way to begin Thanksgiving week! Nothing like getting rid of those pesky calories ahead of time!

Three Forks Northbound to Hawk Mountain Shelter

by Ken Cissna

BMTA members Cindy Minick, Susan Paul, Tom Sewell and I bundled up for the 7.8 miles round trip from Three Forks to the Hawk Mountain Shelter on the Appalachian Trail.

Accompanying us were Susan’s dog Bryson and my dog Artie, both of whom stayed warm bundled in their fur. It was December 14, chilly and windy, but we all seemed to have the clothes for it and I heard no complaints.

We encountered southbounders who we think were finishing their AT journey and, surprisingly, a young couple at the shelter who were northbound and just starting out.

We had lunch at the shelter and headed back taking a side trip to see the new bridge work done by Bob Cowdrick’s maintenance crew.

After the recent rains, cascades of glistening white water roared down Long Creek Falls making a perfect ending to our day!



Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Tom Sewell, Hiking Director

Guidelines for Our Hikes

- ◆ Only hikes that do not require shuttles are allowed under the auspices of BMTA.
- ◆ All hikers must drive to the meeting place and trailhead in their own cars -- no carpooling except among family members.
- ◆ Any potential hiker who is feeling ill, has traveled within the past 14 days to a location with a significant number of cases of the novel corona virus (COVID-19), or has been exposed within the past 14 days to a person who has been confirmed as or is even suspected of having COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
- ◆ All hikes are limited to a maximum of 10 participants—hike leaders may impose even lower limits.

Before, during, and after a hike, participants must maintain an appropriate distance from one another (an absolute minimum of six feet—but 10 or 15 or 20 is much better).

January

January 1 (Friday) BMT/AT Loop from Big Stamp Gap. Start the New Year off right with a hike. Moderate 5 mile hike with three minor creek crossings. Trip will include viewpoints of Springer Mountain and Owen Vista. Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky. For more information, contact hikeleaderMP@bmtamail.org.

January 4 (Monday) BMT from Hwy 60 to the iconic Swinging Bridge over the Toccoa River and return for 7 moderate miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

January 8 (Friday) Talking Rock Nature Preserve. A dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) utilizing the various loops in the Talking Rock Nature Preserve. We plan 5 easy miles but you may decide to add more if you wish after the hike. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information, contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



January 9 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 1a, 1b and 1c — Springer Mountain >> Three Forks. Water diversions, tread repair, brushout and 2a bridge completion.

To RSVP contact Bob Cowdrick GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org.

January 13 (Wednesday) Blue Ridge Aska Road Trails. Easy 4 miles on the Green Mountain, the Connector and Long Branch trails. Hike Leader Martha Fowler. For more information, contact hikeleaderMF@bmtamail.org.

January 17 (Sunday) BMT/Duncan Ridge to Rhodes Mountain. Are you ready for a little challenge? Two miles up with 1200 feet elevation change but it's downhill on the return. We might add a mile on the Duncan Ridge if desired. Total of 4 strenuous miles. Great views along the way. Hike Leader Tom Sewell. For more information, contact hikeleaderTS@bmtamail.org.

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January 20 (Wednesday) Hemp Top to Spanish Oak Gap then BMT to Jacks River Trail. Easy 5.8 miles in the Cohuttas west of Blue Ridge. We'll proceed to Jacks River crossing but stop and return to our vehicles at Dally Gap. Hike Leader Carolyn Sewell. For more information, contact hikeleaderCS@bmtamail.org.

January 22 (Friday) Brush Creek Trail. To celebrate his 82nd birthday he's leading a hike! Easy 5 miles with lots of views of the reservoir of the Ocoee River above the Whitewater Center in Ducktown, Tennessee. Hike Leader Howard Baggett. For more information, contact hikeleaderHB@bmtamail.org.

January 23 (Saturday) TN Work Trip-Two sections



Section 14a TN 68 to Coker Creek. Tread work in the middle of the section where wild boar have torn up the tread. Logout and brushout as needed. For more information, contact Linette Lynn lyn2_volunteer@myself.com.

Section 12b Dry Pond Lead Trail to Deep Gap. A section of the trail on a steep sideslope which is soft shale needs to be redug. For more information, contact Ken Jones w4zug@windstream.net.

January 29 (Friday) BMT Bushy Head Gap to Hudson Gap and back. Four Season Hike Series -Winter. A dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5.2 miles. We're going to offer this relatively short and fairly easy hike during each season this year. Come out now and see great long-distance views, wild flowers in the spring, green and hot in the summer and beautiful colors in the fall. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information, contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

February

February 2 (Tuesday) Blood Mountain from the Byron Reece parking lot. Moderate to strenuous 4.2 miles. Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky. For more information contact hikeleaderMP@bmtamail.org.

February 6 (Saturday) Benton Falls at Chilhowee Campground in SE Tennessee. Easy 2.5 miles. Awesome waterfall and great views of surrounding mountains and lake. Hike Leader Larry Dumas. For more information contact hikeleaderLD@bmtamail.org.

February 10 (Wednesday) Duncan Ridge Trail from Mulky Gap to Sarvis Gap and return. Moderate to strenuous 8 miles. Excellent winter views. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.



February 13 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 2b,c,d. Bryson Gap >> Ga 60. Rootball tread repair, logout and brushout. For more information, contact Bob Cowdrick GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org.

February 14 (Sunday) Valentines Day Hike: Discover a lost heart on Fort Mountain. Moderate 5 miles. Portions of the Gahutti Trail, Lake Loop and Overlook/Tower Trails. Hike leader Carolyn Sewell. For more information contact hikeleaderCS@bmtamail.org.

February 15 (Monday) BMT from Three Forks to No Name Bald and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4.3 miles. Mostly following Long Creek. Largely uphill going and reverse returning. Approximately 700' of elevation change each way. We'll include a side trip to Long Creek Falls. Hike leader Ken Cissna. For more information, contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

February 19 (Friday) Yonah Mountain and return for a total of 5 miles. 1,700' gain as you literally "climb a mountain." This shark fin-shaped mountain has a trail that is a combination of moderate with some steep and rocky sections. Excellent views but expect some icy spots in winter. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

February 22 (Monday) Fort Mountain State Park: Gahutti Trail. Moderate to strenuous 7.7 miles. State Park Pass required. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.



February 27 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Section 12e. Lost Creek CG to Hiawassee River. Trail repair, refresh blazes, logout and brushout. For more information, contact Rick Harris harrisri@aol.com.

Christmas Snow!



The deadline for the February Newsletter is February 3.
Thanks!