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### BMTA Officers 2020-2021

President:	Ken Cissna
Vice President:	Joy Forehand
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Past President:	Barry Allen
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
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State Rep TN/NC:	Steve Barnes



**BMTA Headquarters**

# Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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## BMTA FOUNDING MEMBERS

by George Owen and Joy Forehand

### David Sherman-Founding Father of the Benton MacKaye Trail



During the 1970s, David served as director of the Office of Planning and Research for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), at which time he was reading and researching the life and career of Benton MacKaye. He discovered MacKaye early on had proposed a route for the Appalachian Trail that would come down the more western main range of the southern Appalachians. Sherman began mapping and proposing a route which follows much of today's Benton MacKaye Trail -- it would be about 95 percent on public land.

At the same time, David began talking to some individuals who would become the BMTA's "Founding Members" (David is one of six). The Benton MacKaye Trail Association and work on our trail began in 1979-1980.

Subsequent to his high position in the GA DNR, David went on to an outstanding career in both the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. Serving in both agencies, he is credited with gathering new authorities and funding to complete protection of the Appalachian Trail corridor. After Congress enacted the 1978 Appalachian Trail amendments to the National Scenic Trails Act, he played a leadership role in securing the tracts of land necessary for preservation of the AT's scenic, ecological and cultural values. Sherman was appointed as acting project manager for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Later, when invited by the U.S. Forest Service to join that agency, he held the critical position of Deputy Chief of Land Acquisition for that entity.

Long honored as the "Founding Father of the Benton MacKaye Trail," David was inducted into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame as part of the third class of five honorees.

Many of our "old-timers" in the "know" are quite aware, quite sure, the Benton MacKaye Trail would not now exist if it had not been for David's vision for a trail known for its beauty and peaceful solitude as well as his contagious enthusiasm as he encouraged others to "build the trail". He often helped behind the scenes in ways and contacts beyond most folks' knowledge. Thus, the Benton MacKaye Trail and our association stand as one of his most significant accomplishments!

## Additional Founding Members of the Benton MacKaye Trail

### MARGARET DRUMMOND



Margaret served her adult life as a professor of microbiology at the medical school of Emory University, Atlanta. While at Emory she also rose to become president of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club.(GATC). After her retirement from Emory, she served several terms as chair of the Board of Managers of the Appalachian Trail Conference (now Conservancy). Margaret also served for years on the board of the American Hiking Society.

She is credited with leading a small group who protested when, in the mid-1980s, some of the BMTA leadership wanted to stop and officially complete the BMT at a point in Georgia. At the time, the leadership of the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests did not want to have another long-distance trail enter their states. Margaret was quite successful in her effort to continue the northward trajectory of the BMT!

Margaret passed away early in the 21st century.

### LYMAN EMERSON

Lyman, originally a descendant of one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's relatives, came to the start of the BMTA through the GATC, where earlier he had been Trail Supervisor. During his employment years in the Atlanta area, he served as an official at Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. Lyman and his wife Vivian, a vice-president of the Georgia Botanical Society, were heavily involved in the construction of our trail in Georgia. Lyman passed away in the late 20th century.

### GEORGE OWEN

George, a native Floridian, served in the hospital management field and other jobs in Atlanta where he and his wife Sandy raised two sons. During the 1980s, he oversaw the layout and construction of the Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia. Prior to that he was both Trail Supervisor and then Construction Director for the GATC, where he oversaw partial relocation of Appalachian Trail side trails (including half of the Approach Trail), as well as the layout and construction of the Duncan Ridge Trail. He served as an early BMTA president and later held several BMTA board positions. He now resides in Blairsville, GA and through his two sons has four grandchildren. He is still active in the BMTA and helps to maintain the trail.

### NANCY SHOFNER

Nancy Shofner grew up in Lakeland, Florida, two blocks from George Owen. She graduated with a degree in library science from Emory University and subsequently became librarian at the Southern School of Technology (now part of Kennesaw State University) until her retirement. She also was a “backbone” member of GATC. Among her many jobs and responsibilities for GATC, she was, for years, editor of the Georgia portion of the Appalachian Trail guidebook for GA-to-Smokies and was editor of *Friendships of the Trails*, the first history of the GATC. Our oldest founding member alive, Nancy is now retired to Blairsville, GA. She still hikes and is involved with the local pet shelter.

### RANDY SNODGRASS

Randy came to Atlanta in the mid-1970s from the Washington, D.C. area where he worked for The Wilderness Society. In Georgia, he was the Southeastern Director for The Wilderness Society. While in this position he also became quite involved in the early efforts to establish the BMTA, since all the founders were at that time also involved with The Wilderness Society. Subsequently, Randy became our first BMTA president. In that position Randy did much of the legal work necessary to establish our incorporation as a 501c3 as well as putting in place the fundamental principles for dealing with the IRS, postal service, etc. Unfortunately, after serving as BMTA president for only a few months, The Wilderness Society moved him out of the Southeast to another position.

## Giving Thanks for BMTA's Many Members

by Ken Cissna

I have long been impressed with how many people work so hard for the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. Until I became President that mainly involved my amazement at the turnout on the second Saturdays in Georgia for trail maintenance—these crazy people are out there in good weather and bad to do hard work for the trail. I didn't make it to Tennessee and North Carolina very often to see the challenges there.

From the President's perspective, I now see much more. I see the maintenance in far greater detail across the states, including the many people who go out, often alone on their own section, and keep it up. I also see the tremendous amount of work done by committees; the data management and electronic communications tasks; the recruitment efforts at festivals and through speeches, the hike leaders, as well as so much work done by BMTA Board Members.

In this season of Thanksgiving, I want to give thanks for everything so many of you do for the BMTA! Together we have been able to create something—a 288-mile trail that is ready for National Scenic Trail status, something none of us have done by ourselves. And not just our current members, officers and maintainers and so on, but for all of BMTA's dedicated volunteers who have made contributions to the trail for over 40 years!

I hope you will be able to make it to the annual meeting where I can say so in person. For now, thank you all very, very much!

### 2021 BMTA Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

*See You at the Hike Fest!*



#### Annual Meeting Packet Now Available Online!

To minimize time spent in lines, this year's Annual Meeting Packet is online. All the information on meeting agendas & locations, hikes & non-hiking activities.

Please Bring Your Copy to the Meeting—get yours [HERE!](#)

#### Unicoi Check-in Advisory!

When you check in, if you show a current, 2021 Georgia State Park Pass you will be given a \$5.00 daily credit towards the Lodge Service Fee.

## 2021 BMTA Annual Meeting

# Raffle



Unicoi Lodge  
2 Nite Stay



Fontana Village  
2 Nite Stay



Hike Inn  
1 Nite Stay



Fireside Outpost  
2 Nite Stay

Proceeds go to  
**BMTA's  
Land Acquisition Fund**  
Tickets  
\$10 each or 3 for \$25  
Tickets available  
at the meeting!



Charit Creek Lodge  
\$275 Gift Certificate for  
1 Nite Stay



Starr Mountain  
Outfitters

**AND MORE!**



Historic Tapoco Lodge  
\$300 Gift Certificate for  
Food & Lodging

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

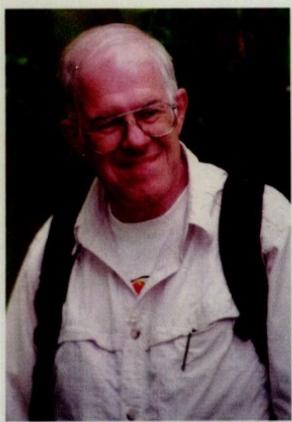


## *From Dream to Reality: History of the Appalachian Trail*

Reviewed by George Owen

It's just off the press now in 2021 - Thomas R. Johnson's masterful history, *From Dream to Reality: History of the Appalachian Trail*. It covers a full century since Benton MacKaye first proposed the Appalachian Trail (AT) concept in 1921 and continues to today.

So why should a BMTAer be reading this book? Several reasons surface. Our trail's namesake, Benton MacKaye, founded the AT concept and is featured in chapter two. We BMTAers often hike the AT and a few of us maintain portions of it in Georgia. The Benton MacKaye Trail is mentioned in the book. But there is another big reason: our own BMTA "Founding Father" David Sherman is frequently mentioned in the book - his birth, background, accomplishments, etc. - complete with Sherman's picture. That's not all, references are in the book to our long-time supporter and early member building our trail in Georgia, Ron Tipton, who eventually became executive director of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy that oversees the AT. Ron is assisting with the effort for us to become a National Scenic Trail - a prestigious designation that may bring with it additional protection for the trail corridor.



Thomas Johnson

In his introduction to this large and detailed history, Johnson starts his list of a few key contributors and begins with this statement, "Leading off is one David Sherman, who guided my research and found much material. His knowledge is so all-encompassing that I've asked him several times why he didn't write it himself. He claims not to be a writer, but the e-mails that he has sent me show that he could have done it. If there is one significant person, both in a governmental capacity and in volunteer roles since the death of Myron Avery, it would be Dave."

Johnson begins his conclusion "Sources and Acknowledgments" near the book's end this way: "Dave Sherman is almost a co-author. His guidance took me through all the chapters of the book." He goes on with an additional paragraph about Sherman's "long and detailed critiques of each chapter." There you have it.

Our own BMTA's Founding Father Sherman is virtually the co-author of this huge and significant AT history. David Sherman, is one of America's great public lands servants. Some of his positions included Director of the Office of Planning and Research for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service in Washington as head of the AT National Park Office, then in the Lands Division of the U.S. Forest Service, acquiring and protecting lands across America. Secret now revealed: It is because of his behind-the-scenes work when he was in the Washington office of the U.S. Forest Service that David Sherman quietly helped pave the way for the Benton MacKaye Trail to be finally moved north of the Ocoee River in Tennessee!

Now more about the author. Johnson was involved with several of us from the BMTA when he worked with the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition while he was chair of a new trail project, the Great Eastern Trail (GET). We came to enjoy and love him. He rose as a young military man to lieutenant colonel in the Air Force, then spent the rest of his life working for the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), writing the NSA history in four volumes. He was the president of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and wrote that large club's history. For decades he was, of course, deeply involved in the Appalachian Trail Conference/Conservancy (ATC), becoming its official historian. He died just a few months ago of a heart attack while on a hike in Shenandoah National Park.

The book is long and detailed and published by the ATC. This is a book to have and enjoy. However, for those not that interested in AT history, it can still serve as a great reference book for one's bookshelf. It is loaded with pictures and old maps relating to the AT.

Continued next page

Early on in the work Benton MacKaye is heavily featured as the originator of the AT concept, a broad socialist ideal that originally offered much more than a long-distance trail. Various early MacKaye ideas of a trail with other termini are presented, along with side trails suggested.

Over 50% of the first half of the book is about the person who became the "other father" of the AT, Myron Avery. This temperamental and domineering figure led the ATC for almost a quarter century until just before his death in 1952. He, more than anyone else, led the effort finally to establish a 2000 plus-mile trail on the ground. The rest of the book centers on the establishment of the 1968 National Trails System Act and the AT becoming the first National Scenic Trail (and now the BMT hopes to become the twelfth!). The latter half of the book details the numerous land deals made to protect the trail. These deals involved unprotected private property and road walks. Our own David Sherman was one of several very much involved in this effort toward full-corridor protection.

Later in the book is a section everyone should read. It is simply titled "Threats." These modern, very real threats, to both the AT and BMT, range from cell towers to new pipe and power lines and more. The list of threats, including more and more home and business development near to our trails, are very real today.

Yes, I am a bit overwhelmed by all the material in this significant trail history. It is a masterful, century-long account, starting in 1921. So if you have any interest in this subject, which includes much about local trail clubs keeping up a trail such as ours, buy your copy now!

*"Leave a footpath for generations to follow."*



### Join or Renew your Membership Now!

For a donation of \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500 you will receive an Individual or Family Membership for 2022.

[MEMBERSHIP](#)

[DONATE](#)

*\*Memberships purchased on/after October 1 will be good through 2022.*



To view the list of nominees for the BMTA Board go [here](#).



For the proposed updates to the BMTA By Laws travel [here](#).

## Cherohala Skyway Festival

by Rick Harris

The fifth Annual Cherohala Skyway Festival was a big success with several hundred folks, maybe even thousands attending. There were booths sporting all types of crafts and groups like the Tellico Plains Public Library and the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. The BMTA booth was staffed by Richard and Brenda Harris as well as Bob and Emily Cowdrick. Bob also had a booth next to the BMTA booth where he was selling his various books and wooden Christmas ornaments.

We were an interactive booth with kids and youthful adults trying their hand at cutting logs with a crosscut saw. The kids had a ball doing this and after they sawed off their disc, they posed for pictures with their disc and the saw. Many of the kids were snatched out of the food line while they were waiting to get BBQ sandwiches. That was a winner for both us and the parents, since the line for the BBQ was at times very long. It gave the kids something to do while the parents stood in line. This year we purposefully asked to be across from the BBQ booth for just this reason. It gave us great visibility and the ability to steal bored kids from the line.



## Falls and Vistas!

by Steve Dennison



### 2021 BMTA Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

#### Silent Auction

#### Gorgeous One of a Kind Benton MacKaye Trail Quilt!

Designed and hand-sewn by Cathy Pilvinsky, this incredible handmade beauty can be used as a wall hanging or draped on a rocker to be used for keeping you toasty by the fire.

It's the perfect addition for any BMTAer's home!  
The 44" by 60" quilt includes a sleeve and rod for using the quilt as a wall hanging or as a lap quilt.



**Christmas Is Just Around the Corner**  
**Order Gifts Today!**

**BMT Guidebooks**  
Collect All Three

**NEW!**  
**BMT Boot Print T-Shirt**

**BMT Bandana**

[Shop the Trail Store Now](#)

### Amazon Smile Benefits BMTA

If you are going to make purchases from Amazon please use this address: BMTA's unique link is [http:// smile.amazon.com/ch/58-1428009](http://smile.amazon.com/ch/58-1428009).

If you do so, Amazon will direct a small share of your purchases to BMTA.

## BMTA TN/NC Work Trip Section 18a Beech Gap on Cherohala Skyway to Haoe Lead Trail

by Rick Harris

We had several thru hiker reports that the BMT between Bob Bald and the intersection with the Haoe Lead Trail was very overgrown with brambles. So we changed the September work trip site to this section of the trail. We met at the Unicoi Crest Overlook on the Skyway and had planned to enter via Beech Gap, but the lock on the gate was not the usual USFS lock. Consequently we drove to the Wolf Laurel Trailhead to begin.

Five Scouts and two adult leaders from Boy Scout Troop 118 in Athens, Tennessee, joined us for this work trip. Nine BMTA volunteers completed our crew. Several of them were carrying brushcutters. We were able to use gas-powered tools because this section is just outside of the Wilderness boundary.

After climbing the mountain to the ridgeline on the Stratton Ridge Trail, one crew with four brushcutters and others with loppers, cleared the brambles between the Haoe Lead Trail to the bald - a distance of about one mile. It definitely needed it. The Scouts hiked straight to the bald and down the west side to the intersection with the trail to Cherry Log Gap. They worked up from there with loppers, swingblades and handsaws. The Scouts did an excellent job. Brenda Harris and Clare Sullivan worked with the Scouts. We still need to go back and finish off the section from Cold Springs Gap to where the Scouts started their work.

We met several day hikers and backpackers while working on the trail, all of whom were very appreciative of our work. Also, on the BMT Hikers Facebook Page, we have numerous Thank Yous. With this done, I believe the rest of the BMT in Tennessee and North Carolina is in pretty good shape for the fall, winter and spring hikers and backpackers.



## Finally, Falls and Hiking!!!!

by Gilbert Treadwell



After three days of rain and several cancelled hikes, Friday, October 8, dawned clear. Five intrepids joined me on a loop hike from Three Forks to Long Creek Falls and Hickory Flats by way of the AT. Next we headed to The Bald on the BMT and back to Three Forks.

Long Creek Falls was in full force! Upon the return, Long Creek had created a new course that required a creek crossing.

All did well, pictures were taken and all completed. Thanks to Rod Jude for sweeping.

Hikers were Rod Jude, Ann Aultman, Mike Castelluzzi, Diane Castelluzzi and Corinne Goldman.

## We're Hiking to Buck Bald?? Isn't That A Brewery?

by Clare Sullivan

Yes, Buck Bald Brewery in Copperhill, Tennessee is a very popular place. Our hike was to the beautiful Buck Bald with 360 degree views of the surrounding mountains. We began our hike on TN 68, 17 miles north of Ducktown, on the BMT. The first half of the three-mile hike was a gradual uphill. There were five hikers in our group and two were first timers. We were delighted to have Kathy and Frank Conrad join the hike and hope to see them on more BMT hikes. Instead of a local brew, we enjoyed our water and stunning vistas!



## BMTA GA Work Day October 9, 2021

by Bob Cowdrick

Divide and conquer was the theme of the day. With two crews working we were able to get a lot done.

Bill Cox along with Shane Morrison, Joe Cantwell, John Oudin and Barry Allen organized a chainsaw crew to remove some blowdowns on Section 8a. These were reported and scouted by Patrick Ward and Shane Morrison and included some suggestions on access points to the blowdowns. With some creative shuttling efforts we were able to get two groups of trees removed at both the beginning and the end of Section 8a. Efficiently focused they were able to get this done quickly.

Dave Ricker recruited a crew composed of members and guests to address the drainage issues on Sections 9 a, b and c along the South Fork of the Jacks River. Dale Clark knows this area well, being the section maintainer on 9c. He, along with Sue Ricker, Kelley Fieldler, Dale Fieldler, George Owen, Steve Kruep, Bob Nelson, Bill Cox, Art Kolberg and Russell Sagon and Angie Sagon joined Dave in this effort. With a shuttle to Dyer Gap and hike down to the river - then through to Watson Gap, the crew was able to clean out 26 water diversions. Add in 10 trees and some brushing gave us a long, but productive, day.

The BMTA Annual Meeting is on November 11-14, usually our typical Georgia work day weekend. Instead we will have a joint work day with the TN/NC crew on November 20.

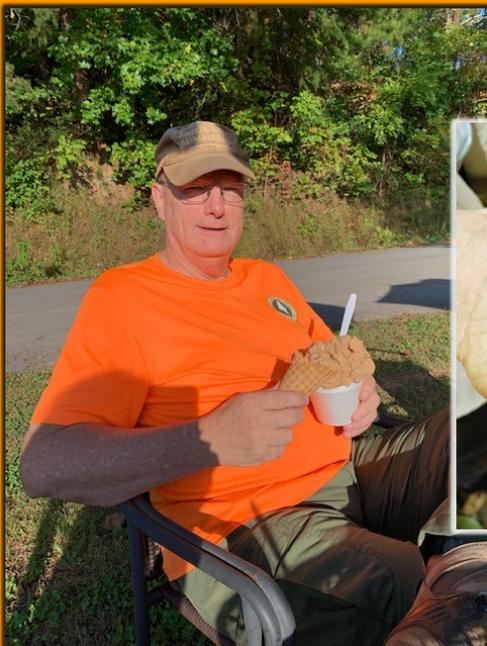


# Crosscut Saw Certifications

by Bob Cowdrick with photos courtesy of Rick Harris and Clare Sullivan

We were fortunate to be able to offer two crosscut saw certification classes this past month. Both sessions were held at Indian Boundary Campground. The Southern Application Wilderness (SAWS) organization provided instructors, tools and wonderful advice. Twenty BMTA members attended for the purpose of both recertification and new certification. Certification is good for three years. These certifications will enable our members to work in wilderness areas on the US National Forests. The intent is to have additional classes available during 2022.

If you desire to become a certified crosscut sawyer, please contact Bob Cowdrick ([bcowdrick@comcast.net](mailto:bcowdrick@comcast.net)) for more information.



Phil Guhl celebrating certification with a waffle!

Patrick Ward celebrating without the waffle !

## BMT Section 18a - Beech Gap to Bob Bald

by Judy Norton

The work trip from Beech Gap to Bob Bald went well. Ten participants enthusiastically helped brush out the trail. Thanks go out to John Nepshinsky, Keith Mertz, Judy Wade, Chris Behrens, Steve Cartwright, Steve Barnes, David Quave, Gary Bible and David Blount. You are the best!!



The trail calls you to follow.



Guardians of the trail.

## Celebrating Benton MacKaye on the “Loop de Loop”

by Ken Cissna

Sunday, October 24, Howard Baggett, Rhonda and Roy Fallon and Carolyn and Tom Sewell joined hiker dog Artie and me for a hike on the BMT/AT upper loop at Springer Mountain. Weather was great—crisp in the morning, giving way to warm and sunny well before we finished. We started at the Big Stamp Gap parking lot and proceeded northbound on the BMT.

We had two big surprises. First, after a few minutes at the Springer summit, up walked immediate past president Barry Allen and his hiker dog Zeke! He had come out to “pre-hike” the same hike for the one he is leading later in the week. For proof, see the photo I took with Barry and Zeke joining our crew. Second, after leaving the summit, we headed to the Springer Mountain shelter, where one of our number (Roy) has actually slept while hiking! That’s unusual enough in my experience, but our real surprise (and treat) was finding a southbound AT thru hiker, trail name Curmudgeon, from New York City, who had completed his thru hike of the AT the day before. He’d started in May and did a “flip flop” hike. His ride was picking him up the next day, so he was getting a couple extra nights at the shelter. He graciously consented to a photo.



It’s a dog’s life!



Congratulations Curmudgeon!!!

## Welcome 2022 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!



[ALDHA](#)



[GEORGIA FOREST WATCH](#)



[THE DUCKTOWN COPPER INN](#)

## Keeping Those Chainsaws Going!

by Bob Cowdrick

With the threat of BMTA members' chainsaw certifications expiring, we were fortunate to be able to join with the Mainspring Conservation and the Bartram Trail Association for a chainsaw class.

We were able to get two members certified and 10 members recertified as Class B Sawyers. With 12 others from Mainspring and Bartram, it was a productive two days. The class had an indoor session Friday afternoon, October 15 and an outdoor all-day hands-on portion on Saturday, October 16.

Dennis Helton of Helton Logging and Bill Van Horn of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy were the instructors for the class. Each student was evaluated on chainsaw safety, limbing and bucking. Members became proficient on multiple types of cuts that are useful when clearing blowdowns. The intent is to have more members certified and recertified in the coming months.

If you wish to join a future class, please contact Bob Cowdrick at [bcowdrick@comcast.net](mailto:bcowdrick@comcast.net) or 678-215-5276 for more information.



Phil Guhl, focused on the job.



Larry Dumas, intent on the cut.



Patrick Ward, finishes up.

## BMT/AT-Two Bottom Loops from Three Forks

by Ken Cissna

Tom Sewell, BMTA Hike Director, was hiker-dog Artie and my only taker on Wednesday, October 27, for a 5.7-mile southbound trek from Three Forks to the lower two BMT/AT loops.

It was a spectacular day for hiking. Cool early, sunny and warmer later. We had plenty of company on both trails.

Photo shows the BMT and AT blazes on a tree near the bridge over Noontootla Creek.



## Hiking the End of the BMT to Davenport Gap

by Tom Sewell

For the October Benton MacKaye Celebration, Tom and Carolyn Sewell decided to explore this section. There are two options for hiking the five-mile connection. You can choose a four-mile road walk (light traffic) or a five-mile hike plus a three-mile connection to an AT hostel/shuttle. The advantage to the extra three miles is a safe place to leave your vehicle. Davenport Gap only has a pull off spot for maybe two vehicles and has a reputation for vandalism.

We decided not to do the road walk. We left our vehicle at Standing Bear Hostel in Hartford, Tennessee, just off I40, Exit 451, known as the exit for GSMNP Big Creek. Maria, from the Hostel, shuttled us over to the end of the BMT/Baxter Creek Trail for a nominal fee. Starting at the end of the BMT we had a .75-mile hike along the Big Creek Road (very light traffic). Just before the Ranger Station we took the Chestnut Branch Trail two miles to the intersection of the AT (1,100' elevation gain). At the intersection you have a choice of heading south to Mount Cammerer and onward to Newfound Gap or north to Davenport Gap. Of course we're heading 1.9 miles to Davenport Gap which is the northern terminus of the AT in the GSMNP. As we left the gap, we had 1.9 miles to the underpass of I40. It's a real shock of noise after seven miles of peace and beauty on the trails. After passing under I40 there's a 100-foot climb up the stairs to continue on the AT one mile back to the Standing Bear Hostel where our vehicle was parked.



Lion's Mane mushroom found at the end of the BMT at Big Creek.



Carolyn at one of the waterfalls along Chestnut Branch Trail.

## Artsy, Informative and Fun!!



The Benton MacKaye Trail Association's Information Tent was at the 2021 Fall Arts in the Park held October 9-10.

For over 40 years this festival, sponsored by the Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association, has drawn more than 20,000 attendees annually. It is recognized as one of the top 10 fine craft towns in America by *American Craft Week*.

Our enthusiastic volunteers chatted with a myriad of guests – providing them with information on the Benton MacKaye Trail as well as answering questions on hiking, trail maintenance and conservation. Fifty-seven signed up to receive information and BMTA gained a new member!

Many thanks to Sharon and Tom Atcheson, Bob Brown, Ken Cissna, Marion Crabb, Cary Page and Clare Sullivan for staffing the tent. Without dedicated volunteers like these, attending these events would not be possible.



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Cherokee National Forest

### Forest Service News Release

Contact: [Ashley Miller](#), Public Information and Community Engagement  
(423) 506-1633

#### Changes to Thunder Rock Campground Reservations

**CLEVELAND, TENN., Oct. 29, 2021**— Eight sites at the Thunder Rock Campground on the Cherokee National Forest are now reservable through [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) effective immediately. Formerly first-come, first-serve, these sites join the rest of the sites at Thunder Rock Campground in being reservable.

Additionally, Thunder Rock Campground will now be open until 1/18/2022, when it will close for one month for maintenance. The Cherokee National Forest is experimenting with keeping the campground open year-round rather than closing for the winter, as it has previously.

“Our goal is that keeping the campground open year-round and adding these sites to the reservation system will allow better access to our recreation opportunities,” said Ryan Farr, Ocoee Recreation Program Manager.

Thunder Rock Campground is located 1.8 miles northwest of the Ocoee Whitewater Center, just behind TVA Ocoee Powerhouse Number 3. Nestled alongside the Ocoee River, this facility provides 37 regular campsites and one group campsite. Thunder Rock is a popular destination for both whitewater and trail enthusiasts.

## Famous for Going Nowhere

by Mike Pilvinsky

As part of the Benton MacKaye 100-year celebration, we hiked on the famous “Road to Nowhere” leading to the Lake Shore Trail along Fontana Lake. Both are located in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The hike begins by walking through a quarter-mile mile tunnel that leads to nowhere...wouldn't you know. After leaving the tunnel, former BMTA president Dick Evans gave a short presentation about the history of Fontana Lake, Dam, and the “Road to Nowhere”. Further along the trail, we visited an old, old family cemetery. This interlude was very sobering as we gazed upon the many infant tombstones planted there. We continued on the trail to campsite number 74. This was a beautiful place for a snack after which we headed back to the trailhead. A beautiful hike on a beautiful day!



## Don't Be a Turkey-Orange Up!!

We recommend wearing bright safety colors when in the woods during hunting season!

Click on the following websites for more detailed information:

**Georgia:** <https://georgiawildlife.com/2020-21-ga-hunting-regulations-available>

**Tennessee:** <https://www.tn.gov/twra/hunting/big-game/deer.html>

**North Carolina:** <http://ncwildlife.org/Hunting/Season-limits>



# BMTA Corporate Members

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THE BLACK SHEEP



KOREAN ALPINE CLUB OF GEORGIA



NORTH GEORGIA TREKS PHOTOGRAPHY



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SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS

**JEFFREY DEPAOLA**  
(404) 550-4488

**SPIRIT KNOB, LLC**  
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STAR MOUNTAIN OUTFITTERS



TAPOCO LODGE



THE DUCKTOWN COPPER INN



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.

## Annual Meeting Hike Fest Schedule

Unicoi Lodge, Helen, GA

Hikes for Thursday, November 11, through Sunday, November 14.

Hikers are to meet and depart at the outside porch on the second level of the Unicoi Lodge. Signup sheets will be available for participants starting in the afternoon prior to the following day's hike with the exception of Thursday hikes which will meet on the porch 15 minutes prior to departure. No advance signups for any hikes. Please remember: on Friday some hikes should end by 3 PM so that BMTA Board Members may have the opportunity to participate. All hikes on Saturday must end by 3:30 PM so that hikers have time to get to the lodge/campground in order to prepare for BMTA events starting at 4:30 PM.

Group size is limited to 12 participants. If you want to accommodate more hikers please be prepared to have a second Hike Leader and a plan to separate the groups so that we follow best practices for limiting impact on the trail environment.

### Thursday November 11

- ◆ **Duke's Creek Falls.** Short 2-mile roundtrip hike but it has a lot of stairs to maneuver. Seven-mile drive from the lodge. Hike Leader Michael Pilvinsky. **Departs lodge at 3 PM.**
- ◆ **Unicoi Lake Trail.** Easy 2.5 miles with a 100' elevation change. Meet at the Lodge. Hike Leaders Tom and Carolyn Sewell. **Departs lodge at 3:30 PM.**

## Friday November 12

*Some participants will need to be here for an early start.  
BMTA Board Meeting at 4:00 & Friday Nite Social at TBA)*

- ◆ **Smith Creek Trail from Unicoi State Park to Anna Ruby Falls** and back. Moderate/strenuous 10-mile hike. Hike Leaders are Tom and Carolyn Sewell. **Departs lodge at 9 AM.**
- ◆ **Raven Cliffs Trail.** Seven-mile drive from the lodge. A scenic 5-mile roundtrip hike along a cascading mountain stream to towering cliffs with two waterfalls. Some difficult footing due to erosion. Hike Leader Bill Witherspoon. Bill will focus on the geology in this specific area. **Departs lodge at 11 AM.**
- ◆ **Helen and Hardeman Farm.** Meet at Unicoi Lodge and drive to the new riverside trail just on the south edge of Helen. We will then walk 1.25 miles through woods to the Hardeman Farm where we will take the official tour. Cost \$7-12 each for the 90-minute tour. Total walking distance is about 3 miles. Last tour is 3 PM. Hike Leader Suzy Downing. **Departs lodge at 1 PM.**
- ◆ **Hemlock Falls.** Easy, great 4-mile hike at nearby Moccasin State Park. Seventeen-mile drive from Unicoi Lodge. Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky. **Departs lodge at 1 PM.**
- ◆ **Unicoi Lake Trail.** Easy 2.5 miles with a 100' elevation change. Meet at the Lodge. Hike Leader George Owen. **Departs lodge at 3:30 PM.**

## Saturday November 13

*Participants return by 3:30 BMTA events start at TBA*

- ◆ **Smith Creek Trail from Unicoi State Park to Anna Ruby Falls.** Moderate/strenuous 5-mile hike. Shuttle required. Hike Leaders are Brenda and Rick Harris. **Departs lodge at 9 AM.**
- ◆ **Smithgall Woods State Park Chunanee Falls Trail.** We will first gather on arrival at the nature center to view interactive exhibits, gift shop, then head to the trails: Tsalaki Trail to Chunanee Falls Trail. Moderate 6.8 miles. Come enjoy this state preserve of over 5,500 acres. Our trekking distance will be about five miles. Seven-mile drive from the lodge. Hike Leader Barry Allen. **Departs lodge at 9:00 AM.**
- ◆ **Yonah Mountain Trail.** This climb of some 1,700' features awesome views from the top. Some rugged, rock-hewn summit trail portions. Overall in-and-out hike is over five miles. Ten miles south of the lodge. Hike Leader Michael Pilvinsky. **Departs lodge at 9 AM.**
- ◆ **Indian Grave Gap to Tray Mountain and back.** Moderate 5-miles on the AT to Tray Mountain. The trail passes Indian Grave Gap (3,113'), a fabulous hillside of Galax, the "cheese factory" turnoff, and a viewpoint just before Tray Mountain (4,430'). Drivers need a 4-wheel drive or a high clearance vehicle since a 6-10-inch-deep creek crossing is required). Hike Leader is Jess Riddle from Georgia Forest Watch. Jess will focus on Georgia Forest environmental issues and introduce you to some tree identifications. **Departs lodge at 9:30 AM.**
- ◆ **Brasstown Bald.** First we will visit the Observation Deck on top of the Bald. Then we head to the upper portion of the Wagon Train Trail and travel northward to the second overlook that looks back at the Brasstown Tower. Total mileage 4.2. Twenty-mile drive from the lodge. Hike Leader George Owen. **Departs lodge at 9:30 AM.**

- ◆ **Unicoi to Helen.** The hike is an easy, almost 3-mile trail from Unicoi Lodge to Helen. Afterwards we have ninety minutes to shop in downtown before meeting at the downtown park and hiking back the lodge. Total 6-miles. Hike Leaders Tom and Carolyn Sewell. **Departs lodge at 10:00 AM.**
- ◆ **Two Waterfalls Tours.** Hidden along Forest Service Roads: High Shoals Falls and Horse Trough Falls. Drivers need a 4-wheel drive or high clearance vehicles since a 6-10-inch-deep creek crossing is required. Hike roundtrip to the High Falls is 2.5-miles. Hike to Horse Trough Falls is 1-mile roundtrip. Hike Leader Larry Jarkovsky. **Departs lodge at 10:30 AM.**

### Sunday November 14

*Departure day, no scheduled events planned*

- ◆ **Testnatee Gap to Levelland Mountain on the AT and back.** This 7.6-mile hike has spectacular views from Cowrock, Wolf Laurel Top and Levelland Mountains. Twelve-mile drive from the lodge. Hike Leader is Jess Riddle from Georgia Forest Watch. Jess will focus on Georgia Forest environmental issues and introduce you to some tree identifications. **Departs lodge at 9:30 AM.**
- ◆ **BMT Swinging Bridge.** Hwy 60 to Swinging Bridge over Toccoa River and back. Moderate 7 miles. Parking space is limited to seven vehicles - we can't reserve space and there is no nearby parking, no room for trailers etc. Hike Leader George Owen. **Departs lodge at 9:30 AM.**
- ◆ **Anna Ruby Falls.** Trail up and back to spectacular Anna Ruby double falls (1-mile roundtrip). Drive from lodge is 4 miles and \$3 admission fee. Hike Leader Bill Witherspoon. Bill will focus on the geology in this specific area. **Departs lodge at 9:30 AM.**
- ◆ **Hogpen Gap on the Richard Russell Highway to Sheep Rock and return.** Moderate 7.5 miles hiking on the AT with a 1,100' elevation change. Eleven-mile drive from the lodge. Hike Leaders Carolyn and Tom Sewell. **Departs lodge at 10:00 AM.**

### November Hikes (Post Annual Hike Fest) and Work Trips



**November 13 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Cancelled (due to the Annual Meeting)– Please help the TN folks by attending the TN Work Trip on November 20**

**November 15 (Monday) Four Season Hike Series – Fall: BMT - Hudson Gap, out and back.** Dog friendly hike. (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4-5 miles. We're going to offer this relatively short and fairly easy hike during each season this year. Come out to see fall colors this time. Hike Leader: Ken Cissna. For more information contact [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).



**November 20 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip** Two Work Trips – The Choice Is Yours. Section 12e – Lost Creek Campground to Reliance. Contact Steve Cartwright, [scdcmc@comcast.net](mailto:scdcmc@comcast.net). Section 18c – Big Fat Gap >> Saddle Tree Gap. Contact Keith Mertz, [keithmertz@hotmail.com](mailto:keithmertz@hotmail.com).

**November 22 (Monday) BMT** from Hwy 60 to the iconic Swinging Bridge over the Toccoa River and return. Moderate seven miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).

**November 26 (Friday)** Hike to The Narrows, a deep narrow gorge through which the old river bed flows on the Hiwassee in Reliance, Tennessee. Moderate 5-miles roundtrip with incredibly beautiful views. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Hike Leader Clare Sullivan. For more information contact [hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org).

**November 29 (Monday)** BMT from Hwy 68 to Buck Bald and return. Five miles round trip. Incomparable 360 degree view of the Appalachian Mountains. Parking area limited. Buck Bald is ½ mile off the BMT. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).

## December



**December 11 (Saturday)** GA Work Trip Sections 11 a, b, c, d, e. Logout, brushout and tread repair. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick [GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org).

**December 13 (Monday)** Select Trails of Talking Rock Nature Preserve. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy to moderate 4-5 miles. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).

**December 17 (Friday)** BMT, Hemp Top, Jacks River Trails. We will start hiking from Watson Gap, enter the Cohutta Wilderness on the BMT, then use the Hemp Top and Jacks River trails to complete a circle and return over a 2.6 repeat of the BMT to Watson Gap again. About 8.3 miles. Moderately strenuous. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).



**December 18 (Saturday)** TN Work Trip Sections 12a, b. Annual logout and refresh blazes. For more information contact Steve Cartwright [sedcmc@comcast.net](mailto:sedcmc@comcast.net).

**December 22 (Wednesday)** BMT. Deep Gap on Aska Road to Fall Branch Falls and return. Strenuous 11 miles. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).



To access our website calendar go [HERE](#).



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