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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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MARCH 2022

BMTA's Hiking Program Through the Years A Successful Endeavor on Many Levels

by Joy Forehand with photos courtesy of Pam Sullivan

From 1980 until 2005 when the grand opening for the Benton MacKaye Trail was held, the focus of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) was on trail construction and recruiting volunteers to do just that. But, once the trail was completed, the association's focus changed to trail maintenance and the need for volunteers with expertise in other areas.

It was the vision of Pam Sullivan that provided the BMTA with a new direction, not only for a new activity, but also as a way to recruit/retain members and to fill positions requiring expertise in fields other than trail construction/maintenance. And it was the perfect venue for the BMTA to fulfill its purpose: *'to promote hiking, camping and a wilderness experience in the Southern Appalachian Mountains; and to instill in its members and the general public a conservation ethic'*.

When Pam and her husband, Richard, relocated from Warner Robbins, Georgia, to Morganton, they had enjoyed canoeing and kayaking on rivers from Georgia to North Carolina – but they were not hikers.

An article on Mountain High Hikers (MHH), inspired the Sullivans to investigate hiking in the North Georgia Mountains. Through MHH, they met George Owen and Darcy Douglas. Owen's boundless enthusiasm for trail maintenance was contagious and Richard soon began helping with trail maintenance.

Pam's attention turned to what she saw as basic needs of the association –attracting and retaining new members, recruiting members with proficiency in administration, etc. Until now, the association's recruitment efforts focused on volunteers with expertise and skillsets suitable for constructing and maintaining the trail. Now, administrative positions (record-keeping, newsletter editor, publicity, raising funds for tools and training, etc.) came to the forefront. The expertise needed for these jobs would be more office/computer related.

Pam believed encouraging camaraderie/socializing among the BMTA's members would be a key to ensuring the future success of the changing needs of the association.

"I thought hikes would be a great way to boost the membership while picking up a few trail workers. Hikes would attract people from a variety of backgrounds. There are a lot of people who might enjoy hiking and would like to help the BMTA, but they don't have the physical ability to be a trail worker," said Pam.

“On hikes, people could enjoy chatting as they walk side-by-side on the trail. The camaraderie and friendships that follow would provide a firm foundation for retaining members. An added bonus – hikers would get to see more of the BMT and other trails in North Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina – and it would make them want to see more.”

Pam asked Owen, “Why aren’t you doing hikes?” His reply was, “Well, if you want to do it...”

Pam accepted the challenge and set up what has become BMTA’s highly successful hiking program.

Because the BMT begins on Springer Mountain, the route chosen for the first hike was from Springer Mountain to Three Forks. At the conclusion of that hike in March 2010, everyone gathered at the Pink Pig to relax, chat and eat.



“We did a hike a month. My favorite was Bald River Falls in Tennessee – such a beautiful waterfall – and then we’d go to the bakery in Tellico,” said Pam. “Dick Evans led what he called an ‘extreme hike’ in the Slickrock area. It wasn’t a long hike, but hikers really enjoyed the challenge of scrambling over the rugged terrain.”

After Pam retired, Ralph Heller and Sara Bland built on Pam’s foundation, encouraging the public to “Join the BMTA for an easy trek hike”. Mike Pilvinsky expanded the program further to include a “backpacking 101 overnight”. Ken Cissna recruited even more Hike Leaders, initiated dog-friendly hikes and significantly increased the number of hikes offered each month.



An “outgrowth” of the Hiking Program, the Annual Meeting Hike Fest has become one of the most popular events on the BMTA Calendar.

The association’s current Hike Director, Tom Sewell, added multi-day camping/backpacking treks at Fort Mountain State and Falls Creek Falls State parks.

We invite you to join us for a hike! To choose the hike that’s right for you, go to the [BMTA’s Event Calendar](#). For more information and/or if you would like to become a BMTA Hike Leader see [page 11](#) of this newsletter or contact [Tom Sewell](#).



YOU Can Help Make the Benton MacKaye Trail the 12th National Scenic Trail!

Contact your Congressional Representative

*Let your representative know why you believe the BMT
should be designated as a National Scenic Trail.*

To learn more, go to [representative](#).

Extra, Extra! Tennessee Work Trip April 4-7, 2022

by Rick Harris

We sure could use your help on any on the following days, Monday-Thursday, April 4-7, 2022. We have six folks coming from all over the USA to help us get this trail back into hikeable shape. Once done, it will make a nice backpacking loop from the Tellico River up the BMT to Whigg Meadow, then down this trail back to the Tellico River.

We need to supervise them each day they are here. Generally, we will meet them at the Sourwood Campground – just upriver from Green Cove and go to Pheasant Fields or Whigg Ridge Road for each day of work. Work will be done with trail digging tools, hand saws, loppers, swing blades and paint for refreshing blazes.

Please let me know what days you might be available to help on this project. Contact Rick Harris at Harrisri@aol.com or sign up [online](#).

Those of you from Georgia who would like to work more than one day or would like to come up the night before can stay at our house near Tellico Plains. Just let me know.



“Nanny, my legs are too short for this hill so I need to have my hands help me hike. I might need some more trail mix too.”

The Creep of Cabin Civilization

by Kathy Williams



Laurel Creek 2015



Laurel Creek 2022

Transformation

by Bob Cowdrick with photos from Brad Snyder

Trans·for·ma·tion: A dramatic change in form or appearance! Many transformations occurred on the Benton MacKaye Trail during the Saturday, February 12, 2022, Georgia workday.

Gilbert Treadwell's Section 1b needed some water diversion transformations. With the help of Steve Pruett, Steve Hayden, Steve Dennison, Penny Strickland, George Owen, David Blount and Bob Cowdrick, Crew 1 transformed 53 diversions from slick runoffs into sculptured water diversions. Gilbert was occupied with some National Scenic Trail initiatives but was able to join us after lunch and gave us all 5-star ratings on the effort completed. Well done!



Continued next page

The Section 7b root ball landslide was transformed with the work being done by Crew 2 consisting of Chris Alain, Phil Guhl, Andy Meeks, Brad Snyder, Shane Morrison, Patrick Ward and Art Kolberg. With Barry Allen's guidance some stubborn rock outcroppings were removed. The next step was to add a 14-foot bridge over the landslide. Kudos to the crew for using the removed rocks to armor 20 feet of muddy trail on the approach to the bridge. I'm sure Tom Keene, Section 7b section maintainer, will be pleased. Excellent work!

A special thanks to Penny, Chris and Brad for joining us on their first work day. You picked a beautiful day to be working on the trail. We appreciate your help.

Our next BMTA Georgia workday will be March 12. Please join us!



MARDEE KAUFFMAN

by Marge Heller



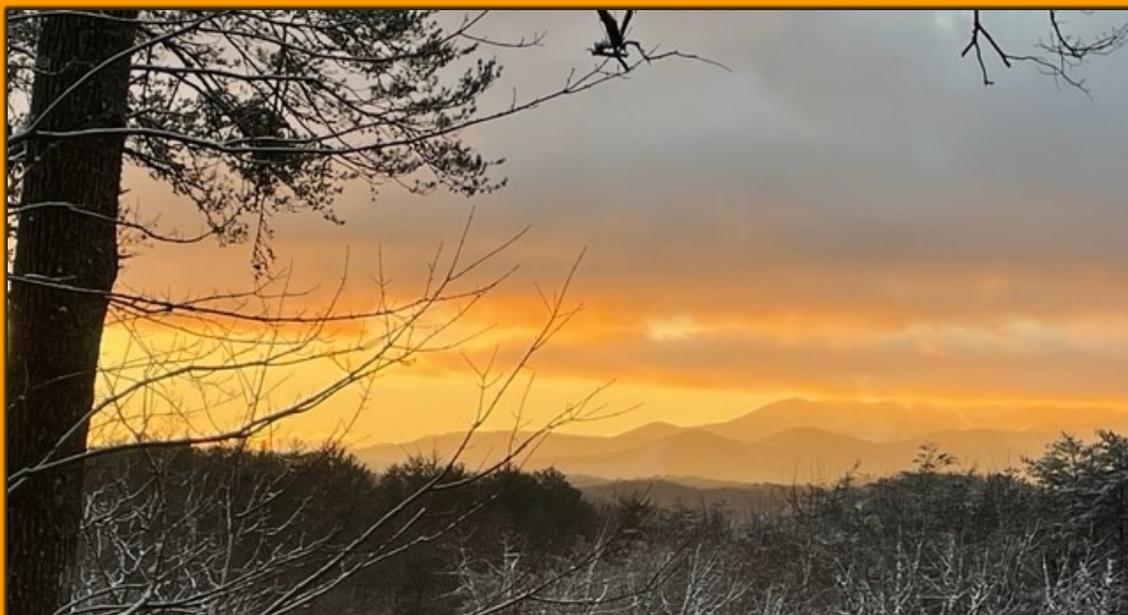
A bright star in the tourism industry of Blue Ridge, Mardee Kauffman, has passed away at the age of 96.

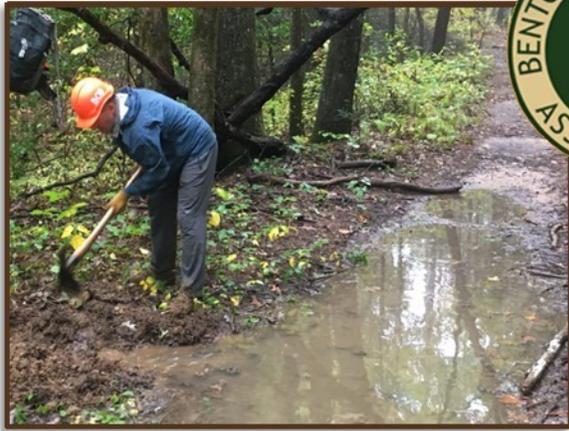
Mardee was a leader in the development of tourism and a longtime member and chairman of the Fannin Chamber's Tourism Committee and as well as the Chamber Ambassadors. She and her husband Dan were instrumental in promoting the 1996 Olympic Games and Whitewater Center for the benefit of growing tourism in the Copper Basin.

I met this wonderful couple when Ralph was BMTA's President and I headed up Publicity. Mardee and Dan were very supportive of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) and kindly volunteered a few times at various BMTA Booths. It was always a pleasure for me to be in their presence.

As told to me by their daughter, Meg Kauffman, a lot of guests at the Kauffmans' White House Bed and Breakfast in Ducktown walked the BMT. Dan would pick them up at the trailhead and Mardee would do their laundry while the hikers spent a day or two off the trail and in a real bed. Many hikers had provisions sent to the B&B. After restocking their gear with provisions and clean clothes, Mardee and Dan would drive them back to a trailhead. With their huge hearts, there were no extra charges for any of this. They were just that in love with the area and wanted to support the people of the BMT.

I feel honored to have known Mardee and Dan.





Join Us for an Ides of March Work Trip
There's a job for everyone!

GA Work Trip—April 9, 2022

Section 4 Skeenah Gap >> Wilscot Gap: 5.3 miles of trail

Tread improvements, blowdown removals, brushing and sign installation

[Register for the Georgia Trip Now!](#)

To help us plan, please sign up early!

[Register for a TN/NC Trip Now!](#)

TN/NC Work Trip—March 26, 2022

Section 18d – Big Fat Gap >> Yellowhammer Gap

Remove blowdowns. Crosscut only — this is Wilderness!

Remove protruding limbs and branches hanging over trail

Tool Donation Thank-you!

by Bob Cowdrick



Jim Holland, a long time BMTA Member, Maintainer and Saw Trainer has donated some tools, PPE and his crosscut sharpening vise to the BMTA.

His donation is greatly appreciated! The tools have found a new home in Tennessee and are being put to good use.

The vise currently is stored at the Georgia work center along with the PPE for use on future training events.

Jim has a number of crosscut saws he is willing to sell to BMTA members as he continues to downsize his collection. Contact Jim at jimholland3creeks@gmail.com for more details.

Thanks again Jim! We truly appreciate all that you do for the BMTA!

Participants Needed for Research on Backpackers



If you are or have been a backpacker— from a “weekender” to a thru hiker— Amanda Reinke, a researcher at Kennesaw State University, would like to interview you.

The interview would take about half an hour.

To learn more before committing or if you’re willing to participate in the study, please contact:

Amanda Reinke

Assistant Professor of Conflict Management
at areinke@kennesaw.edu.



KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY

Go Take a Hike!

by Tom Sewell

BMTA is recruiting Hike Leaders for 2022 and beyond!

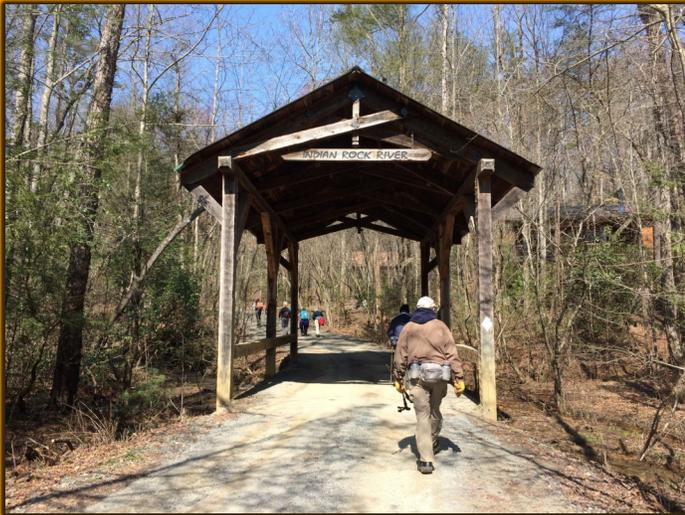
If you enjoy hiking with small groups of people and like to share your favorite trails, becoming a Hike Leader may be the opportunity for you!

As a Hike Leader, you'll be able to choose from a wide array of hikes on the Benton MacKaye Trail as well as other trails throughout North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia. Just select the date, time and one of your favorite hiking destinations and you're ready to lead your first hike.

Experienced Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) Hike Leaders will provide one-on-one training for your pre-hike and/or first hike. Six excellent Hike Leaders (Ken Cissna, Darcy Douglas, Rick Harris, George Owen, Carolyn and Tom Sewell) are ready to train you now!

You'll have your own, personal BMTA email address. And, if you lead five or more hikes during the year, you'll qualify for a BMTA Hike Leader T-Shirt!

If you're interested in becoming a Hike Leader and would like to learn more, contact Tom Sewell at hikeleader@bmtamail.com.



“What in the Blazes” the Benton MacKaye Trail?!

by Darcy Douglas



A bunch of us enjoy doing this part of maintaining the trail. You work at your own pace, and, you get to choose where you'd like to work, so there are options!

If you would like to join our esteemed group, please contact me at bmtadarcy@yahoo.com or 404-431-3614 and we can formulate a plan.

The white diamonds on the trees help hikers find their way, so they are rather important!

The point our having one group do this task was primarily so we'd have consistency of blazing. When you go through the training you will understand.

Please let me know when we can add you to our roster. Thank you!



Course on Appalachian Hiking

Our own BMTA member, George Owen, will lead a course entitled "Hiking in the Southern Appalachians for Both Beginners and Experienced Folks" in April and May at Young Harris College in Young Harris, Georgia. The class will be every Monday from April 11 to May 23, afternoons 1:00 - 3:00 PM. The cost is \$25 per person. All participants must be fully vaccinated to attend. This class is sponsored by the Institute for Continuing Learning (ICL), a popular continuing education organization centered in the southern-most Appalachians.

Mr. Owen emphasizes the overriding purpose of the course is for both information and fun. He is planning to use multi-media, music, several visiting experts and even cartoons to make the class useful and hopefully exciting. Basic information, handouts and multiple resources will cover such subjects as:

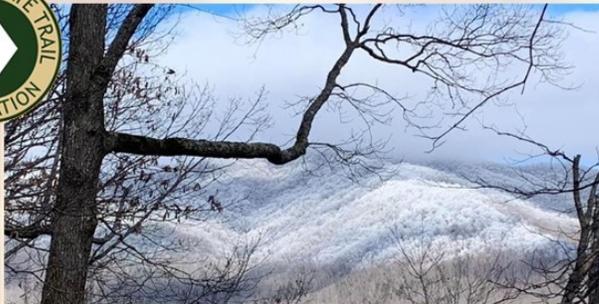
- ◆ The trails in our tristate area
- ◆ Hiking clubs
- ◆ Trekking equipment
- ◆ Public land agencies
- ◆ Flora and fauna
- ◆ Hiking safety with basic first aid
- ◆ Planning for seasonal variations
- ◆ Wilderness and other forest categories
- ◆ Basic ecology
- ◆ Trail building and maintenance basics



Several of Mr. Owen's friends and other experts will be helping with the course. Some short hikes on trails near the college after class will be an optional feature on some Mondays for those interested.

For more information, go to the ICL Calendar [2022-Spring-Bulletin-Calendar.pdf \(iclyhc.org\)](#).

To register, click [2022-Spring-Bulletin-Registration.pdf \(iclyhc.org\)](#).



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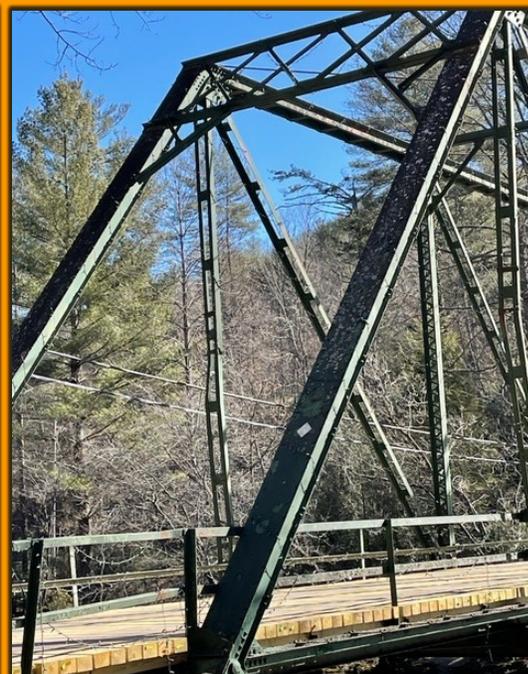
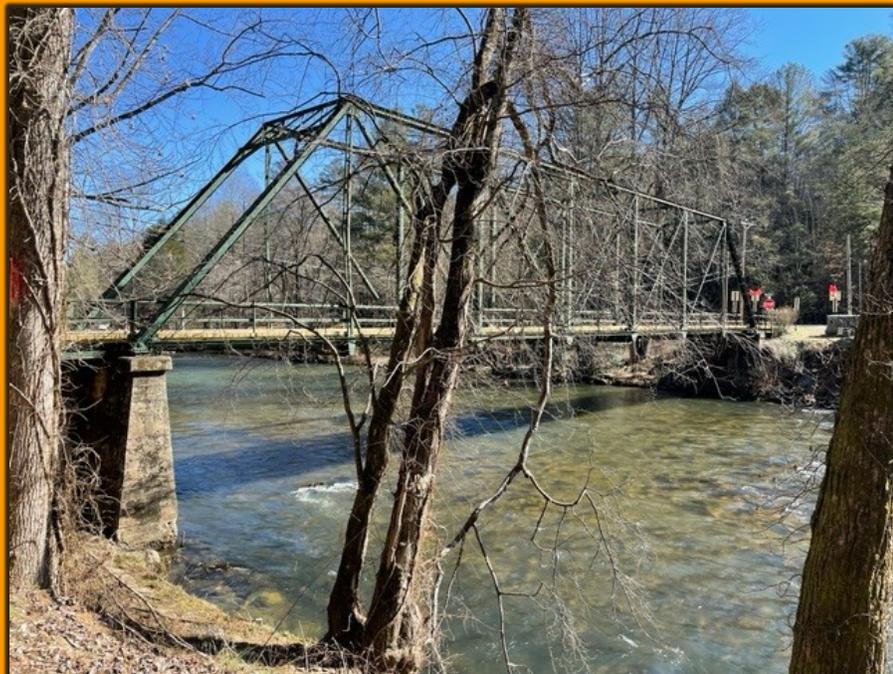


Hikers on Buck Bald find mountains with their apps!
So WOW!

Photo courtesy of Steve Dennison

Wandering on the BMT

by Kathy Williams



Okay, you don't know exactly where you are going so just find the blaze.



Whoops! — definitely not a Darcy approved blaze!



Oh, hey, how ya doing sir? Nice day for a hike. (EEK)!!



Ahh!

Continued next page



Some blazes require looking down.



Sometimes just looking up is the best!



Yay! I got the app to work!!

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



AMVETS POST 911
POLK COUNTY, TN



CELEBRATE BLUE RIDGE
CABIN RENTALS



GEORGIA FOREST WATCH



HISTORIC TAPECO LODGE



MOUNTAIN WISDOM CAMP

History Needs You! by Darcy Douglas

History...does that interest you? If so, please contact me. I am looking for a partner to organize for permanent storage the archives of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. At the moment they are in my home, so some good victuals are part of the reward for helping out!

Contact me at bmtadarcy@yahoo.com or 404-431-3614. We could use a few folks, for the committee approach!



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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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Trail Workers
2022 Hours Now Available
[Accumulated Hours Report](#)

**Remember, mileage to and from work events is a tax deductible expense!*

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 - 2022.

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.

March

March 14 (Monday) 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 Jacks River trails to complete a circle and return with a 2.6 mile repeat of the BMT to Watson Gap again. About 8.3 moderate/strenuous miles. Hike Leaders Carolyn and Tom Sewell. For more information contact hikeleaderCS@bmtamail.org.

March 18 (Friday) BMT/AT: Upper two loops on Springer Mountain from Big Stamp Gap. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). About 5 moderate miles. See all the sights: Springer Mountain, an AT shelter, the beginning of the BMT, the plaque honoring Benton MacKaye and Owen Vista!

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

March 21 (Monday) BMT in the Cohuttas. Dyer Gap to Dally Gap. A moderate 7-mile hike between two BMT access points via FS Roads. Length and location of hike necessitates car shuttles. Please don't request participation if you're opposed to a shuttle on FS roads that may take 30 minutes each direction or have concerns about Covid-19 exposure. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

March 24 (Thursday) AT/BMT Loop from Three Forks to Hickory Flats to No Name Bald and back to Three Forks after a stop at Long Creek Falls. Moderate 7.6 miles. Hike Leader Gilbert Treadwell. For more information contact hikeleaderGT@bmtamail.org.



March 26 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip Section 18d
(Big Fat Gap >> Yellowhammer Gap)
Contact Keith Mertz keithmertz@hotmail.com.

March 30 (Wednesday) Caney Creek Historical Community. Moderate 7 miles.

One large creek crossing to the abandoned historical community of Caney Creek on the Ocoee River. See lots of artifacts. This tiny town had mass transit, bathtubs, electric streetlights, concrete sidewalks, tennis courts, hotel, telephones, school and church but no stores. It existed from 1918-1941. No automobiles ever travelled there. For more information, Google Caney Creek, TN. Be prepared for an hour's drive on FS Road 221 in the Cherokee National Forest.

Hike Leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan. For more information contact hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org

April

April 1 (Friday) BMT to Rock Creek Trail in the Cherokee National Forest.

Begin at Thunder Rock parking, cross Hwy 64 and proceed up the BMT to the Rock Creek Trail. Hike 7-8 miles back to Hwy 64. A few creek crossings and nice views. Short Shuttle. Moderate hike. Hike Leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan. For more information contact hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org

April 4 (Monday) Thunder Rock Express on to Chestnut Mountain Trail to BMT down to Thunder Rock Campground. Moderate 5.3 miles. Whitewater Center in Ducktown, Tennessee. Hike Leaders Evelin and Doug Yarns. For more information contact hikeleaderEY@bmtamail.org.

April 6 (Wednesday) Long Branch Connector off Aska Road to Lake Blue Ridge via the Green Mountain Trail and return. Moderate 11 miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison.

For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

April 8 (Friday) Flat Creek Loop: Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) Moderate 5.6 miles. Nice loop hike featuring Flat Creek.

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



April 9 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 4a-b (Skeenah Gap >> Wilscot Gap).
Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net.

April 18 (Monday) Wildcat Creek/Turner Trail Loop with side trip to Rocky Ford Cascades. Approximately 8 miles with brief, steep segments. Hiking poles recommended. Trail located in GA Wildlife Management Area and requires carrying a free GA Lifetime Sportsman license free for Georgia residents over 65. Permits can be obtained a permit from the GA Department of Natural Resources. Hike Leader Steve Dennison.

For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

April 22 (Friday) BMT - Hudson Gap, out and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) moderate 4-5 miles. Come out to see spring wildflowers. Hike Leader Ken Cissna.

For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



April 23 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip Section 18e (Yellowhammer Gap >> Ta-poco Lodge) Contact Keith Mertz keithmertz@hotmail.com.

April 25 (Monday) Park Creek/Park Ridge Trails, Standing Indian area near Franklin, North Carolina. Moderate 5-mile hike with several creek crossings. There will be beautiful spring flowers to admire. Hike Leaders Carolyn and Tom Sewell. For more information contact hikeleaderCS@bmtamail.org.

April 27 (Wednesday) Lady Slippers! Mulky Gap. Blairsville. Easy /moderate 1.5 miles. Before embarking on the hike, hikers will go across the road to see a huge garden of thousands of Pink Lady Slippers. The hike itself begins on an old logging road. Trillium, Showy Orcus, Wild Geranium, Wild Iris and Dutchman's Pipe are just a few of the spring beauties to be seen. For the return, we'll switch to the Duncan Ridge Trail where there are Flame Azaleas as well as some super-sized Pink Lady Slippers. Note: this will be the first hike after the 2021 controlled burn. Hike Leaders Joy and Frank Forehand.

For more information contact hikeleaderJF@bmtamail.org.

May

May 4 (Wednesday) Lady Slipper Hike. BMT at Weaver Creek in Blue Ridge.

Moderate to strenuous 3.8 miles. This will be a SLOW, LEISURELY hike to enjoy the wildflowers. Initially we'll pass by beautiful mountain laurel groves peppered with flame azaleas. Stop for a leisurely lunch at the water cutoff beside some of the largest lady slippers on this section. As we stroll back to the trailhead, we'll pass numerous gardens of the pink beauties. Hike Leaders Joy and Frank Forehand. For more information contact hikeleaderJF@bmtamail.org.

May 9 (Monday) BMT from Thunder Rock Campground, up Thunder Rock Express Trail, across Chestnut Mountain Trail, and down BMT. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5.2-mile loop.

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

May 20 (Friday) Amadahy Trail. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy to moderate 5 miles along the shore of Carter's Lake. Lunch at the marine campground.

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

Save the Dates!
November 3 - 6, 2022
BMTA Hike Fest and Annual Meeting
 Fontana Village, North Carolina
 For reservations call (828) 498-2211.
 To receive your discount -
 Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!

Deadline for the April Newsletter is Wednesday, March 30. Thank you!