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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 43, ISSUE 4

APRIL 2026

An Update from Save Georgia's Hemlocks

by Darrell Sheffield with photos by Dan Reynolds



Hemlock draped in snow.

Since the inception of our organization in 2009, many volunteers have worked tirelessly to ensure there will be a population of healthy hemlocks for future generations.

Hemlocks play a unique role in the forests where they provide food and habitat for many species of animals, shade for native plants, and cool temperatures for trout streams. They are also critical to ensuring protection for watersheds and water quality.



Evidence of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid on a hemlock branch.



A young hemlock with healthy new growth.

Unfortunately, North Georgia's hemlocks are seriously threatened by the rapidly spreading infestation of the hemlock woolly adelgid, a tiny invasive insect from Asia with no local natural predators. Adelgids are able to invade and overwhelm even a large hemlock and kill it in just a few years. During your hikes along the BMT, you may have seen areas where these majestic trees have been devastated. Hemlocks on private land are vulnerable, too.

Do you or a neighbor want to know more about hemlock trees and ways to protect them? On the first and third Thursday of every month from 7:00-8:00 PM, Save Georgia's Hemlocks offers a virtual workshop. We provide general information about hemlocks and tips for how to care for them on your property. The link to the virtual classroom is provided on the home page of our website.

[Save Georgia's Hemlocks](https://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org/) [\[https://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org/\]](https://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org/)

This year, we will continue to work with the US Forest Service to identify areas where hemlocks can be treated and organize teams of volunteers to participate in those treatment sessions. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or helping in any way, please contact us at the Hemlock Help Line: 706-429-8010 or email info@savegeorgiashemlocks.org.

Ahhh... New Bench at Owen Vista



Terrie Goriscak with "Trail Boss" Artie, Stephanie Gordon, Roger Gordon, Katherine Sanders and Dick Adams enjoy the newly installed bench during their AT/BMTA Loop Hike. Hike Leader Ken Cissna took the photo.

BMTA Maintainer Safety: A Core Commitment for 2026

Presidents Column by Bob Cowdrick

Safety has always been a cornerstone of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association and in 2026 it continues to guide everything we do on the trail.

As we look ahead to another productive year, our goals remain clear and focused: **Maintain all 288 miles of the Benton MacKaye Trail, Have fun, and Do it safely.** These three priorities go hand in hand—because a successful trail program depends not only on the work we accomplish, but on the well-being of every volunteer who makes that work possible.

A key part of strengthening our safety culture this year has been the leadership of Safety Coordinator, Steve Pruett. Steve has taken meaningful steps to ensure that our volunteers are well prepared for emergencies. One of the most impactful improvements has been the acquisition and distribution of first aid bleed kits to all of our sawyers. These kits are a critical addition to our safety program, providing the tools needed to respond quickly and effectively in the event of a serious injury.

But equipment alone isn't enough—training is what makes it effective. Steve has provided online instruction session to ensure our sawyers are confident in how to use these kits, and he regularly attends Saturday work trips to offer hands-on refresher training. Importantly, this training extends beyond sawyers to include swampers and all work trip participants. This inclusive approach ensures that everyone on the trail is better prepared to respond in an emergency, reinforcing a team-wide commitment to safety.

As we head into 2026, let's continue to look out for one another, stay mindful of safety practices and support the efforts that keep our volunteers prepared. By doing so, we not only protect ourselves—we strengthen the entire BMTA community.

Because at the end of the day, achieving our goals means more than maintaining miles—it means ensuring that every volunteer returns home safely, ready to enjoy another day on the trail.



Bleed kit components.



Steve Pruett conducts training at the Saturday maintenance trip on use of the bleed kits.



2026 Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

November 5-8, 2026

Copperhill Brewery in Ducktown, TN

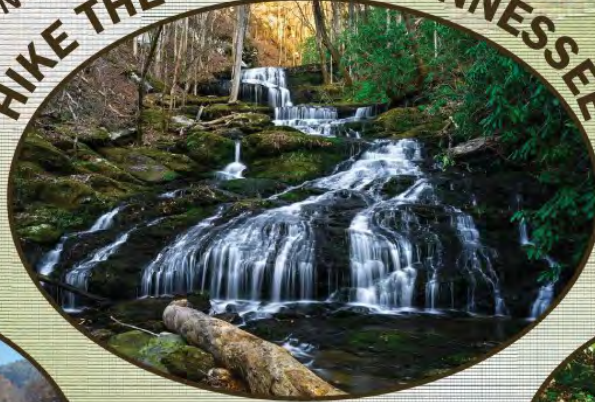


VIEW OF BROCK MOUNTAIN



TOWEE CREEK

HIKE THE HILLS OF TENNESSEE



THE NARROWS



LOST CREEK



CAMARADERIE WITH FRIENDS & FAMILY

Make Your Reservations Today!

The Mallard Hotel (423) 933-2039, Company House Bed and Breakfast Inn (423) 496-5634 or Copperhill Cabins (423) 496-5225. Contact bmtaannualmeeting@bmta.org for details.

Upper Big Lost Creek Falls Exploratory Hike Joint BMTA & Cherokee Hiking Club Adventure

by Rick Harris

Eleven hikers, Rick and Brenda Harris (Hike Leaders), Barb Childress, Partrick Bowker, James Anderson, Buddy Arnold, Steve Hayden, Charlie Snow, John Hisey, Otis Pannell, Judy Norton and her dog, trudged over five creek crossings to reach the Upper Big Lost Creek Falls. This was a great day to do this, since the weather was warm and the creek levels were great—not too low or too high. This trail starts at the Lost Creek Campground and goes about 2.5 miles upstream to a side creek, Bearpen Branch, with the waterfalls only a short distance up that creek bed.



This trail long ago was abandoned and had probably not been maintained since the 1990s. The Tellico/Ocoee Volunteer Trail Crew have spent four Thursdays reopening this trail with chainsaws and brushcutters. This day our hikers cleared the last half-mile of the trail with handsaws and loppers. Now the trail is open and can be “easily” hiked, at least in comparison to just a month or so ago.

The first mile to the 2nd creek crossing is wide open and in great shape. After the creek crossing the trail gets sketchy in places. A work trip with tread repair tools is needed. Then the old railroad bed goes around a sharp bend where floods have all but obliterated the trail. Here we crossed the creek for the third time and re-crossed the fourth time to bypass this section. After this 3rd creek crossing, we started using loppers and handsaws to clear a trail which Rick Harris marked with yellow flagging tape. We continued this work all the way to the final creek crossing at the junction with Bearpen Branch.

We then travelled up the side branch to the falls, clearing some logs and doing some lopping on the way. We spent a good amount of time viewing and photographing the falls, then returned to the trailhead, enjoying the fruits of our labors and crossing the waters five more times.



This waterfall hike is a real gem, and it is great that it has been reopened to the public. In the future weeks, the trail crew will perform some tread work, remove a few more trees which are stepovers, paint blazes and install signage.



**Help Us Do What We Do Best
Maintain the BMT**

Join or Renew or Donate Today!

“A Great Turnout that Turned Out Great!”

by Patrick Ward

On Saturday, March 28, 2026, the BMTA enjoyed a turnout of 16 volunteers to help with trail maintenance on Section 12d and a ½ mile of cojoining 12c. As of the previous Wednesday we had eight signed up and by the day of the work we had doubled in attendance!

During our routine gathering time we enjoyed greeting one another, sharing our names and our favorite weeds in celebration of National Weed Appreciation Day. Many indicated they like dandelions and some other fav's included poke salad, bloodroot and others I can't spell! We also conducted the ever-important safety briefing and were treated to a specially prepared presentation by Steve Pruett covering the topic of how to use our sawyers' bleed kits. It was entertaining, important and informative.

Dividing into four crews the work was accomplished mightily and with good spirits on a beautiful spring day in the mountains of Tennessee.

Barry Allen led the saw crew NOBO from McFarland Road clearing 24 blowdowns with his swampers Ralph VanPelt, Charlie Snow and Kenny Martin.

We had a foursome of brushcutters led by Joe Cantwell clearing undergrowth along the 4+ mile stretch...hats off to Bob Cowdrick, Shane Morrison and Bryan White for this extra effort of early spring brush maintenance.

Our SOBO saw team consisting of Rick Harris, Josh Granderson and Patrick Ward cleared 14 blowdowns from the Lost Creek Campground (LCCG) until they met up with the NOBO's.

Crew 4 was led by Steve Dennison, eagerly taking our crew of tread repair workers up the steep slope from LCCG cleaning out 27 water diversions and widening tread as needed along the way. Steve, along with Shelton Crow and Tim Williams, did an outstanding job of tread repair and restoration.

Finally, an honorable and appreciated shout-out to Brenda Harris who came to support the work as a shuttle driver.



The April BMT Blog Is Here

***'More Than Upkeep:
Why Trail Maintenance Matters to
Ecosystems'***

*Use the Subscribe Button in the Blog to
Subscribe to the New RSS Feed!*

Conservation Corner

by Darcy Douglas

The Benton MacKaye Trail organization decided many years ago to adopt Leave No Trace principles. Since then, some established campsites have been created, but for the most part, we try to follow these tenets. Here is the first one, with some breakdown. You can access all seven by looking [online](#). There are small cards available to hang on a pack as a way to share with others. Hopefully, these guidelines will remind us how to keep our trail as pristine as possible, minimizing our impact on plants, animals, other people, and entire ecosystems.

STEP ONE:

Plan Ahead and Prepare

- ◆ Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- ◆ Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- ◆ Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- ◆ Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.
- ◆ Repackage food to minimize waste.
- ◆ Use a map and compass or GPS to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.



Mr Bones always carries his Leave No Trace card with him.

BMTA Store Notice:

Orders placed between May 8th and the 24th will be mailed on Tuesday May 26th.

Please plan accordingly.

Here and There



Kees deVente eclipsed his recent 102' water diversion three-team record (Kees deVente, Shelton Crow and Steve Dennison) with a new 104 water diversions! Wow!! Photo courtesy of Steve Dennison.



Jamie Anderson, Bob Cowdrick and Ian Gutteridge install new signage. Photo courtesy of Steve Pruett.



BMTA Hiking Director Ray Laws engages with an interested hiker about the Benton MacKaye Trail at the A.T. Gateways Fest on February 28th.

Dozens of attendees, some as far away as Oklahoma and Arizona, visited the BMTA booth at the annual hike kickoff event sponsored by the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club.



A BMT blaze sheltered by an unusual burl. Photo courtesy of Steve Pruett.

Southern Appalachian Wilderness Skills Institute WSI 2026

The 2026 Southern Appalachian Wilderness Skills Institute will be May 4-8, 2026. It will start at 1 PM ET on Monday and conclude at 12 PM ET on Friday. It is free for participants to attend. All participants are expected to sign up for an entire week.

Courses:

- Crosscut Sharpening
- Trail Structures
- Trail Maintenance-Tread and Drainage
- Stonework
- Southern Appalachian Ecosystems
- Tool Rehandling
- Leave No Trace



For more information go [HERE](#)

The Trail Skills Workshop has expanded over the years and now provides comprehensive training opportunities focused on building and maintaining hiking trails, especially in the southern Appalachians. This event is an excellent chance to develop and enhance the skills required to support and deliver high-quality hiking trail experiences.

Sometimes You Need to Dig Yourself a Hole!

Darcy Douglas, Kathy Gushwa and Steve Hayden know how to dig a hole. A blazing sign was needed on Section 7a for a stretch across a large meadow. Ian Gutteridge made the sign and Darcy organized its setting.



Kathy Gushwa learns the art of post holing.



Thank you Kathy, Steve and Darcy for a job well done!

Three Fought the Tree and the Three Won!

by Steve Dennison with photos courtesy of Kathy Gushwa and John Oudin

When three Section Maintainers team up there is incredible work accomplished. Maintainers John Oudin, Kathy Gushwa and Steve Dennison cut some small impediments and a couple of knobs from a 440-pound locust tree lying across the trail. Then they teamed up and pushed four times in unison rolling the tree off the trail! This eliminated the need for a sawyer to haul a chainsaw two miles roundtrip!



John Oudin and Steve Dennison with the trail work sign at Bushy Head Gap.



Kathy Gushwa and Steve Dennison celebrate victory!



BMTA PARTNERSHIPS

Help BMTA preserve, protect and maintain the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Become a BMTA Business, Silver, Gold, Platinum or Diamond Partner today!

Go to [Partnerships](#) to view the details.

Employer Identification #58-1428009.

**If you receive a benefit as a result of making a contribution to a qualified organization, you can deduct only the amount of your contribution that is more than the value of the benefit you receive.*

A Visit with Walt Cook

by George Owen

Many of you from the BMTA will remember Walt Cook, who for several years was Maintenance Director of BMTA for Georgia and a frequent Hike Leader.

Now Walt is 94 and resides in Athens, Georgia. He is a retired professor of forestry for the University of Georgia Forestry School. Over the years he has also been a good friend and co-hiker with BMTA "Founding Father" David Sherman and Ron Tipton, our current key Washington, D.C. representative for establishing the BMT as a National Scenic Trail.

For years Walt tramped the woods in several southeastern states with that strange old group made up from some BMTAers called "The Old Pros" (not originally a complimentary title but one given in derision). For many years Walt was the BMT Section Maintainer of the 3.6-mile trail over Toonowee Mountain running from GA Hwy 60 to the Toccoa Swinging Bridge. It was Walt who supervised the first major repair of the bridge when it was about 25 years old. He measured and cut the timbers for the decking and rails to make that repair possible.

Recently Walt and his son Ken were the welcomed and celebrated special guests at George Owen's home. Lunch was provided by Darcy Douglas. Included were three of his long-time BMTA close friends from the past. Many memories of his days as a top maintenance leader in the BMTA were recalled and shared. BMTAer Marty Dominy drove all the way from his farm in South Georgia to be a part of the get-together. That meant Walt was with three former BMTA presidents on February 10 (Ironically US President's Day). George, Darcy and Marty had all served as BMTA presidents.



Darcy Douglas, Walt Cook, George Owen and Marty Dominy

The original route of the BMT over Toonowee Mountain was built by George. During Walt's years as maintainer of that section the trail was lengthened by about a half mile after George decided to make the climbs on each end of the mountain more gradual. Walt was his right-hand man in that effort.

Walt laid out the reroute on the north end near Hwy 60 and George laid out the uphill on the south side near the Toccoa River Bridge. Later both worked together to do some relocations around the knobs along Toonowee's summit. BMTA members assisted as well.

It was a wonderful reunion after a long time for all four of these close friends and BMTA old-timers.

It reminds us of how many everlasting friendships have formed thanks to the BMTA and BMT.

Incidentally, the next day, February 11, was George's 88th birthday!

BMTA at Banff Film Festival

by Ken Cissna

The BMTA had an outreach booth at the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour in Blairsville, Georgia. It was a unique opportunity to interact with lovers of the great outdoors!



Opening Day

Outdoors and Hiking in the Southern Appalachians Class

by Kathy Williams

For the fourth year in a row George Owen began his ever-popular Outdoors and Hiking in the Southern Appalachians Class at Young Harris College's Institute for Continued Learning (ICL). The class filled to capacity and there was a waiting list.

George introduced himself as "The Old Trail Troll." Then he had everyone introduce themselves. There were many newcomers to the mountains as well as some who had been coming for years.

George read his favorite quote from John Muir, "*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn.*"

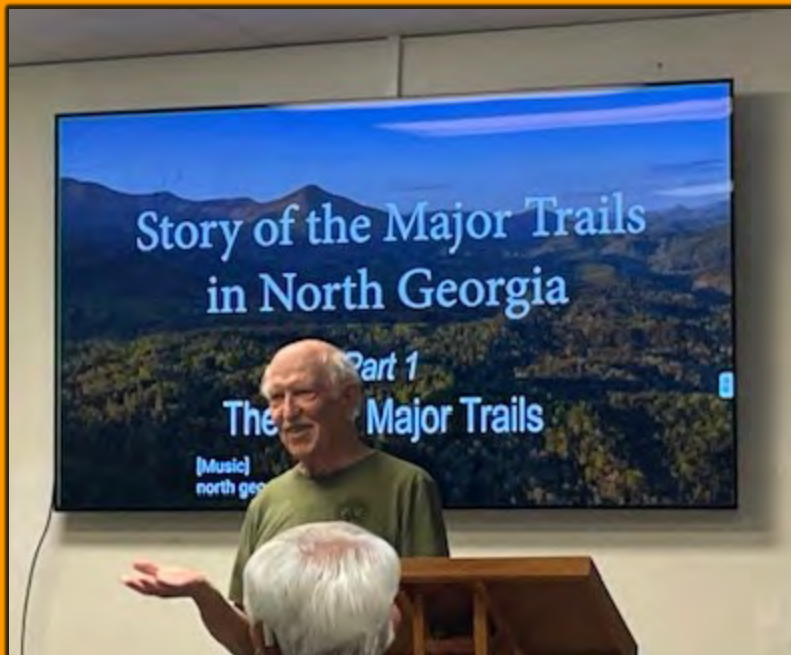


"The Old Trail Troll"

Several brochures featuring hiking trails in and around the area were distributed. George spent some time on each including the one from Vogel State Park. He described the various trails at Vogel and encouraged the class to go and see the new Visitor Center.

George informed the class about a new Ken Burns documentary on Henry David Thoreau that has been on PBS in case there was some interest in one of our foremost advocates of being outdoors.

The agenda took on the four major intrastate trails that are in the state of Georgia - The Appalachian Trail (AT), the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMTA), the Pinhoti Trail and the Bartram Trail. This introduction set the stage for the second part of the class. Joe Boone from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC) was the guest speaker. He gave a history of long-distance trails in this area focusing on these four major ones.



Joe Boone from the GATC.

Joe's presentation centered around an informative video, *Story of the Major Trails in North Georgia Part 1*. This video has four more segments that can be accessed on [YouTube](#). Interviews with some of the people who built the trails add to the historical significance of them.

After class, participants who had brought their lunch gathered in the lobby for some socialization before setting out on a hike to nearby Lake Chatuge.

The hike was an easy one-mile loop along the lake on a small peninsula. The trail is maintained by the Mountain High Hikers Club. Joe Boone was the Hike Leader.



George and his class prior to the hike.

At the start of the hike Joe Boone showed the class some of the apps that are useful for hikers. Some give you trails while others can give you information on plants and mountains you see as you hike. When the hike encountered trail issues like water diversions, erosion, root exposure, thorny branches and side-cutting he explained some of the ways that trail work will address them. The scenery was serene and enjoyable. Most had never been in this area before.



Hikers could see how some of the apps functioned.



Trilliums were out!



The view of this mountain changed during the hike. It was alarming to see smoke appear!



Some of the hiking discussions included how the lakes are drawn down in the winter months exposing red shores lines. All in all, the day was both informative and entertaining! A great way to start a class!

To Bob-A Memorable Spring Break

Hi Bob,

This morning I will go onto campus to take care of the last bit of paperwork from our hike on the Benton MacKaye Trail. I want to take a moment to thank everyone from the BMTA who helped to make the trip a success. If I did not know the meaning of southern hospitality before I certainly do now! This includes the campground host who scoured the campground for firewood and lent us both an axe and a blow torch to ensure the desires for a fire were met. :-)

I can't say the trip went exactly to plan, but it was a time that myself and everyone who participated will remember fondly for a long time. The group on this trip was particularly fun and silly throughout and over the course of our journey, a group of strangers became a tribe. I think everyone took away a deeper understanding of themselves and what they are capable of as well as the sense of accomplishment that only hiking over mountains can bring.

The effort that has gone into maintaining the Benton MacKaye was evident throughout our walk. Over the course of 30 miles of hiking, I could probably count the number of downed trees on one hand. A short excursion down the Jacks River Trail made it obvious that such an easy tread does not happen by accident. I am super glad that we had the opportunity to meet Daphne and Laurie. Of course, their contributions in moving the van and even taking some of the students into town for a bite to eat were above and beyond as was your taking the time to refine our hiking plan with me.

Thank you again,

Eric Bachmann
Trip Leader, Outdoor Pursuit Center
Professor and Chair (retired)
Miami University



Upcoming

by Ray Laws, Hiking Director

April

April 10 (Friday) BMT – Bushy Head/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. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



April 11 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. Section 6 (Shallowford Bridge >> Weaver Creek Trailhead).

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

April 13 (Monday) Rhododendron Trail to Chestnut Ridge to Bear Baw Loop and return. Ocoee, TN area. Moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

April 17 (Friday) Eastern Wildcat Creek Monday. About 6 miles, starting at the campground off Steve Tate Road for pink lady slippers, a side trail to Rocky Ford Trail and return. Georgia Wildlife Management Area license needed, available for purchase online. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at sdennison@bmta.org.

April 21 (Tuesday) Trails of Jack Rabbit Hayesville, NC. Moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

April 24 (Friday) Hike: BMT Whigg Meadow to Beech Gap, leaving Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 9:00 AM. Moderately strenuous with elevation gain of up to 2000 feet. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. This 4.8-mile section of the BMT will start at Whigg Meadow (~5000' elevation) with its expansive views and will follow the BMT north to Mud Gap then along the state line ridge all the way to Beech Gap. With minimal tree foliage, the views should be fantastic with the majority of the winter behind us. There are quite a bit of ups and downs, so expect to get a good workout. What to bring: Lunch, water, your dog on leash. After the hike, we will have to retrieve vehicles up on the Whigg, then we can go to Tellico Plains for dinner possibly at the Ironworks Grille right on the edge of the Tellico River. They have outside seating where well-behaved dogs are allowed. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org



April 25 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. Section 17D (Mud Gap >> Beech Gap).

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

April 28 (Tuesday) Green Mountain Trail (Deep Gap to Lake Blue Ridge). DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) About 4 moderate miles, up Green Mountain and then down to the Lake. Shuttle required. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

May

May 1 (Wednesday) Flats Mountain hike, leaving Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 9:00 AM. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. Moderate 6.2-mile hike takes us along the crest of the mountain which sits above the lake at Indian Boundary. The trail for the most part is downhill (~2000' drop) and most of this downhill trek is in the last two miles. We will leave cars at the bottom along Citico Creek Road, then travel to the trailhead at the top of the Cherohala Skyway at mile 19. We will first climb a couple hundred feet to two balds, then start our downhill trek, partly in and partly out of the Citico Creek Wilderness. We will be limited to 12 hikers. What to bring: Lunch, water, your dog on leash. The middle 2 miles is often quite brushy unless we have been up there to clear the brush on a Thursday work trip before our hike, so long pants and long sleeve shirts are recommended. We will eat lunch at a gap about halfway down the trail. Afterwards, we can congregate at the Tellicafe for supper. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org

May 6 (Wednesday) Unicoi State Park, Helen, GA. Bottoms Trail, Frog Pond Nature Trail and Unicoi Lake Trail. Moderate 5.5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

May 8 (Friday) Brush Creek Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 7 miles. Almost all gently downhill. Short shuttle. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

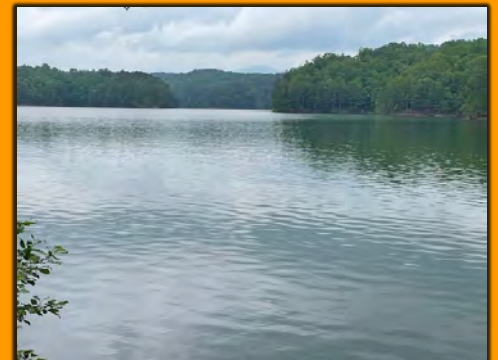


May 9 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

May 11 (Monday) Brush Creek Loop in Ducktown, TN. Moderate 4.5 miles along Ocoee Lake # 1. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

May 18 (Monday) Smithgall Woods State Park just outside of Helen, GA. Goldmine Trail. Moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.



Carter's Lake

May 22 (Friday) Amadahy Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog).

Easy/moderate 5 miles along the shore of Carter's Lake. Lunch at the marine campground.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



May 23 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

June

June 6 (Saturday) Clean Trails Day

BMTA and [AllTrails](#) are partnering on this spring's Clean Trails Day.

Stop by one of our event tents at Fall Branch Falls in Gilmer County or the Swinging Bridge in Fannin County where BMTA volunteers will be on hand to answer your questions about hiking, camping and backpacking opportunities in the area. They also can tell you how to hike the trails safely and to leave the pathways in pristine condition for future hikers to enjoy.

For information contact Joy Forehand at jforehand@bmta.org.



June 12 (Friday) Turtletown Creek Falls. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5 miles. Turtletown Creek plus two of the most beautiful falls you'll ever see on a short hike. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



June 13 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

June 15 (Monday) Piney Knob Gobbler Trail. Murphy, NC. Moderate 6 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

June 19 (Friday) 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. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

June 20 (Saturday) "Watch the Water Arrive". Begin at the Ocoee Whitewater Center to watch the rapids arrive from TVA Dam 3 release. The rafts ride the rapids down. Then hike the BMT from FS Rd 221 - Thunder Rock Campground via shuttle. The rosebay rhododendron just might be in bloom. Easy 3.4 miles, except for one hill. Contact Hike Leader Clare Sullivan at csullivan@bmta.org.

June 26 (Friday) The Hangover. Meet at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 9 AM. **THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC.** This 7-mile fairly difficult iconic hike takes us from the Wolf-Laurel Trailhead up 500' or so on the Stratton Ridge Trail to the BMT, then right on the BMT to Naked Ground (down 500'), then Haeo (up 500'), then on to the Hangover (down and up 200' or so). This is a must-do if you have never done it before and if you are healthy and strong enough to hike it. This is not an easy hike. In places the trail is quite steep and rocky and there may be significant brambles to hike through. We will eat lunch at the Hangover, which is about a mile-high rocky overhang with great views into the Smokies, Santeelah Lake, Tellico Lake and the Tennessee River, the Cumberland Plateau and the ridgelines we just hiked. We will return the way we came. Afterwards, we can eat supper at one of the two Mexican Restaurants in Tellico Plains. This hike is in the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness therefore, we must limit it to 12 hikers. What to Bring (food, water, etc.): Lunch, water, your dog on leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org



June 27 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA
Contact:
BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-nemaintdirector@bmta.org

June 29 (Monday) Yonah Preserve. Cleveland, GA. Moderate 5 miles around the lake. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

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



Photo by USDA Forest Service, Amy Galetka.

Did You Know?

You can sign up for alerts about prescribed burns. Here are three that impact the BMT. This can help you to plan your hiking and camping activities.

[Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest | Alerts | Forest Service](#)

[Cherokee National Forest | Alerts | Forest Service](#)

[National Forests in North Carolina | Alerts | Forest Service](#)

Talented People We Need You!

We have many members who are talented in woodworking, quilting, crafting, photography, etc. who might like to donate something for the raffle at the Annual Meeting November 5-8, 2026. Some of the most sought-after items came from our members. Thank you! **Contact Donna Jones, the raffle coordinator, if you can help at djones@bmta.org.**

**The deadline for the May Newsletter is Wednesday, April 29.
Thank you!**

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[TRAIL STORE](#)

Welcome BMTA Partners!

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

BUSINESS PARTNERS



ROBERT CRAWFORD
HIXSON, TN



GOLD PARTNERS

