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BMTA Officers 2025-2026

President:	Bob Cowdrick
Vice President:	Kelly Wentworth
Secretary:	Jessie Hayden
Treasurer:	Suzie May
GA M/D:	Joe Cantwell
TN/NC M/D:	Patrick Ward
Smokies Coord:	Steve Pruett
Hiking Director:	Ray Laws
Membership:	Byron Coker
Communications:	Joy Forehand
Conservation:	Darcy Douglas
Past President:	Ken Cissna
Store:	Sue Ricker
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
State Rep GA:	Liz Henderson
State Rep TN/NC:	Clare Sullivan



BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 43, ISSUE 8

AUGUST 2026

The Kind of Day That Makes the Work Worthwhile

by Steve Bayliss

The morning came gray and cool over the mountains, the way a good working morning should. Connor Bayliss and Steve Bayliss went out on Section 13e of the Benton MacKaye, from Wildcat Creek to Coker Creek, three miles of trail that needed attending to, and they attended to it.



They carried string trimmers and they worked. The trail corridor needed clearing and they cleared it. Three miles of it. The overcast held all day and kept the heat away, which was good, and the mosquitoes had not yet come into their full meanness, which was also good. There were no yellow jackets. It was a good day for the work, and they worked well in it.

The hogs had been through. You could see it everywhere along the trail — the earth torn and rooted and dug, the way hogs do when they work a piece of ground. The hogs do not care about the trail. Nobody told them to care and so they don't care.

They saw a black snake in the way snakes are on warm days when the clouds keep the air soft. The snake was fine. They also found a large turtle in the middle of the trail, laying her eggs there with great patience and no particular concern for the two men and their trimmers. She knew what she was doing. They left her to it.

The trail corridor is now clear of vegetation. That is what needed to be done, and it is done.

There are five blowdowns noted. Trees across the trail, put there by time and weather, the way trees go. The trail is passable over or around each of them, but they should be cut out. That is a chainsaw job for another day.

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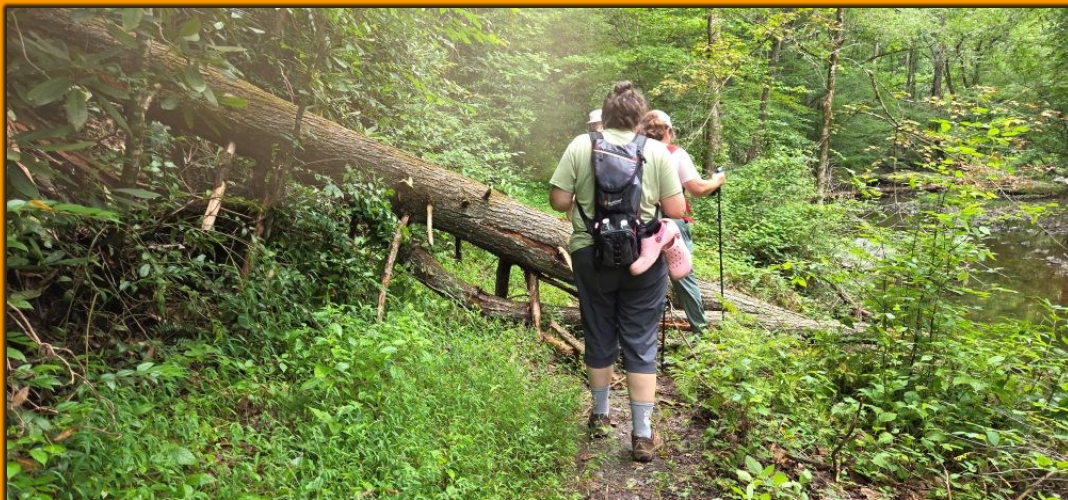
On the high switchbacks, up where the rock outcrops push through the hillside, there are two sections of trail that are losing their edge. The trail is sluffing off below the rock, sliding down those steep slopes the way things slide when there is nothing to hold them. It is not yet bad, but it will get bad. What is needed there is cribbing — timber cribbing, built from trees felled or dragged in from close by, set in to hold the trail and give a man something solid underfoot on those slopes. There is material on-site to do it. What is needed is another man to swamp, to help get the trees out and work the cribbing in.

If someone from one of the upcoming monthly work trips in that area could be borrowed for a day, the job could be done right and done properly, before the trail loses any more ground to the mountain.

It was a good day. The kind of day that makes the work worthwhile. They did what they came to do.

A Good Day to Get Lost at Lost Creek

Photos courtesy of Judy Norton



Continued next page



The August BMT Blog Is Here!

***'Who Was Benton MacKaye?
Why His Vision Matters More Than Ever'***

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

Freedom Fest at Bryson City, North Carolina

The BMTA booth at the Freedom Fest on July 4th introduced the trail to visitors from all over the US. Volunteering were Liz Henderson, Steve Pruett and Kathy Williams who thoroughly enjoyed people watching in between engaging with festival goers.



Steve Pruett and Liz Henderson are ready to welcome visitors.



Steve locating the trail on a map.



How does she do that?!



Big Foot and Liz showing their colors!



Uncle Sam stopped by!

... thinking about Joe.

by Bob Cowdrick

Our little crew of seven spent the day brushing the Benton MacKaye Trail at Wilscot Gap. It was one of those days that made all of us think about Joe.

I had the privilege of using a brush cutter with "Joe C." written on it. As soon as I picked it up, it felt like Joe was right there with us. He had bought it himself and kept it in the BMTA tool shed. He brought it on just about every work trip, and it was easy to picture him out on the trail, working hard, telling stories and making us laugh.



As I walked the trail, I couldn't help but smile thinking about Joe. It's funny how someone can leave such a lasting mark—not just on a trail, but on the people who walked it with him. His kindness, his generosity, his work ethic, and his love for these mountains are still with us every time we head into the woods.

On October 3, 2026, at 1PM there will be a Celebration of Life for Joe Cantwell at The Gilmer Arts Center in Ellijay, Georgia.



- BMTA Raffle -



Gift Certificates for
Popular
Lodging Facilities

Gift Certificates for
BMTAers'
Favorite Restaurants

Original Crafts
by
BMTAers

Proceeds go to
**BMTA'S LAND
ACQUISITION FUND**

Tickets Available
at the Meeting!

\$10 each or 3 for \$25

7 for \$50

16 for \$100

Handcrafted
Hiking Sticks &
Custom Pottery

November 7, 2026 Copperhill, TN

To see pictures & a list of some of the donated items, go to [RAFFLE](#).



Dress to Impress Polo Shirt

Now Available in BMTA's
Trail Store

Great shirt for when you're
out & about with friends & family.

**Items usually ship within a week.*

Timing is Everything

by Bob Cowdrick

Thanks to the efforts of **11 BMTA members** and **nine Scouts and Scout leaders**, Sections 8a, 8b and 8c of the Benton MacKaye Trail are in excellent shape for hikers. These sections needed some attention, and the Scouts did an outstanding job under the leadership of Steve Dennison and Kees deVente. Thank you, Scouts, all for your hard work and enthusiasm.



Boy Scout Troop 32 from Epworth, Georgia led by Scout Leader Brittany Higgins.

Timing is Everything.

Daphne Martin, Carol Nufer, Laurie Schatz, and Steve Hayden were working on Section 8b when they came across a tree that had finally fallen across the trail. It has been hanging in the air for years and fortunately they had the skills to remove it before it became a problem for hikers.

Timing is Everything.

On Section 8c, Sue Ricker, Dave Ricker, Barry Allen, Bill Cox and I cleared the trail corridor and completed our work just as the skies opened up. We finished minutes before the steady rain and downpours arrived.

Timing is Everything.

When Bill and I returned to the work center to put away the tools, Steve and Kees were just getting ready to leave. We convinced them to stay a few extra minutes to help carry the tools inside—just in time to dodge the raindrops that were beginning to fall.

Timing is Everything.

Our Tool Maintenance Director, Sam Sly, also happened to be at the work center investigating ideas for improving tool storage. It was the perfect opportunity to give him a tutorial on our new radios and talk through the best way to store and charge them.

Sometimes everything just seems to come together. This was one of those days. Great volunteers, productive trail work and just enough cooperation from Mother Nature to let us finish the job!

Thank you to everyone who volunteered!

Bob



Blue Skies T-Shirts

Now Available in BMTA's
Trail Store

*Perfect for Hiking, Trail Work or
When You're Just Out & About.*

*Select Short Sleeve or Long Sleeve T-Shirt
using the Buttons Below.*

Short Sleeve

Long Sleeve

**Items usually ship within a week.*

Escape to Yonah Preserve

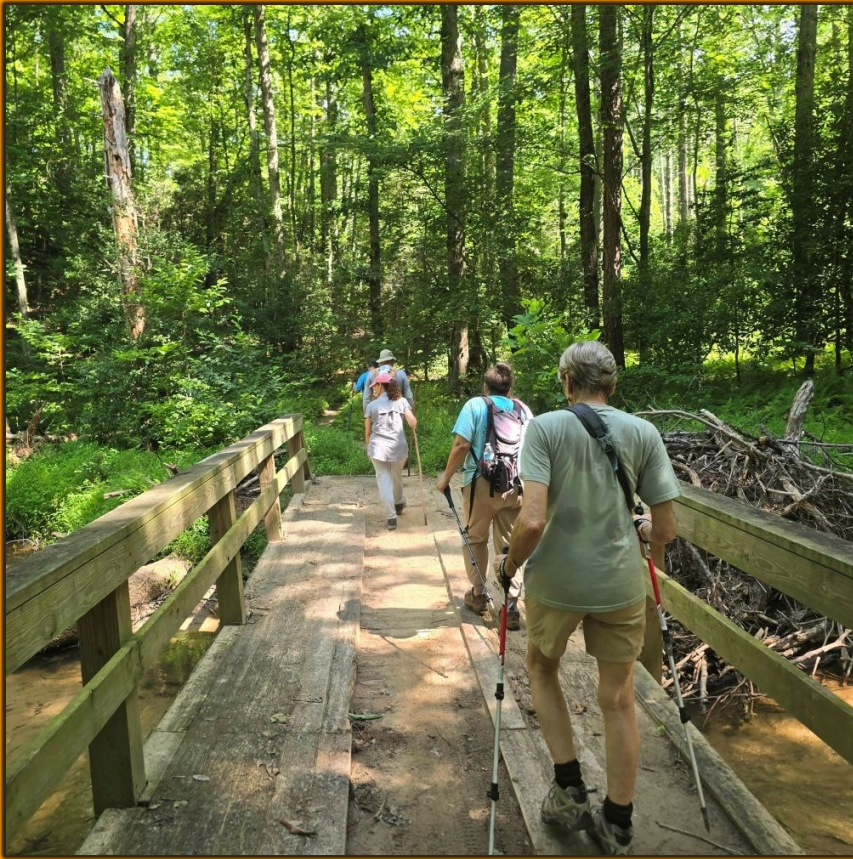
From Hike Leader Ralph Collinson



Hikers sought a cool retreat from the heat when they delved into the forests of Yonah Reserve.



Continued next page



The bridge to forest emeralds.



The caress of fern fronds along the way.



Joy!



Let's just wander more.

Nominating Committee Report for Next Year's Board of Directors

Reported by Ken Cissna

This year's Nominating Committee, charged with proposing a slate of BMTA officers for 2027-2028, consisted of Clare Sullivan, Steve Cartwright, Bob Cowdrick (*ex officio*) and Ken Cissna.

We are fortunate to continue to have dedicated volunteers who make it possible for the BMTA to continue fulfilling its mission: "To preserve, protect and maintain the Benton MacKaye Trail."

The proposed slate of officers is:

President:	Bob Cowdrick
Vice President:	Kelly Wentworth
Secretary:	Sarah Kennedy
Treasurer:	Suzie May
Georgia Maintenance Director:	Patrick Ward
TN/NC Maintenance Director:	David Watkins
Smokies Coordinator:	Steve Pruett
Membership Director:	Byron Coker
Communications Director:	Frank Forehand
Conservation Director:	Darcy Douglas
Hiking Director:	Ray Laws

Two other positions are filled by the President (Georgia State Representative and Tennessee/North Carolina State Representative), and three Board filled by a vote of the Board of Directors (Newsletter Editor, Store Manager and Coordinator of Electronic Media). The Immediate Past President completes the Board of Directors.

Thank you to each of you and to the volunteers who assisted in this process.

Voting takes place at the Annual Meeting on November 7, 2026. Nominations may also be made from the floor.



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.*

Report Sightings of Yellow-legged Hornets

In August of 2023 an invasive hornet known as the Yellow-legged hornet, was found in Savannah, Georgia and they have been spreading. They are destructive to honeybees and will exhibit a behavior called “hawking” where they hover outside beehives and then capture bees as they leave the hive. More nests have been found since then. For more information and how to report a sighting go [HERE](#).

THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COMMISSONER TYLER HARPER

4 Identifying Characteristics of the Yellow-legged Hornet (YLH)



1. Size

Adults are about 2 cm long. Comparison of common look-alikes found in Georgia are shown.

2. Narrow Waist

Look for a narrow waist, more cinched than the sawfly look-alike shown.

3. Yellow legs (bottom half)

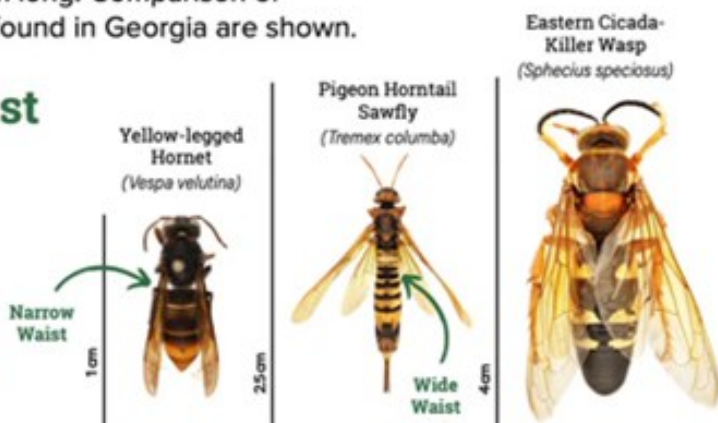
The namesake characteristic of YLH is the yellow color found on the bottom half of the insect's legs.

4. Yellow 4th abdominal segment

Look for a strong yellow stripe on the fourth abdominal segment shown here with arrow.

If you spot a YLH, report it by scanning the QR code to the right.

Information courtesy of University of Georgia Extension




Yellow leg (bottom half of leg)

Yellow 4th abdominal segment

SCAN TO REPORT:



Forests, Rivers and Lakes



Happy to hike Boyds Gap to Ocoee Whitewater!
Photo courtesy of Ray Laws



Rafters stuck on a huge rock at Ocoee Whitewater!
Photo courtesy of Kathy Williams



Lake Trahlyta at Vogel State Park as work continues.
Photo courtesy of Kathy Williams



These interesting structures are for future fish beds once Lake Trahlyta is refilled.
Photo courtesy of Kathy Williams

Take a Side Trail to Explore Falconry

by Kathy Williams

One of the wonders of being outside in the forests is the sighting of the many birds in the wild. You do not have to be a birder to enjoy the songs and gaze in awe as they soar above us. Recently I attended a program on Falconry at Vogel State Park presented by [Georgia Mountain Falconry](#). So, just what is Falconry? Georgia Mountain Falconry states “falconry is taking wild quarry in its habitat with a trained bird of prey. And it is called “falconry” whether you use a falcon, hawk, owl or eagle. For over 4,000 years humans have partnered with a raptor to take game.”

Every falconer in the US is required to pass a test in order to obtain a license and there are varying degrees of expertise. One of the more interesting things that was shared was how this ancient relationship is used today to control pests, a process called abatement. Abatement is used at airports to discourage birds from staying in the area to lessen the possibilities of a bird strikes on airplanes. Resorts and golf courses as well as farming use abatement. Georgia Mountain Falconry has even been used to keep crows away from Mercier Apple Orchards in Blue Ridge, Georgia.

The best part of the program was when they brought out a number of the raptors, and we were able to get very close to observe them. It was hard to take one's eyes away from their intense stares!



The Eurasian eagle-owl is not native to the UAS. It hisses like a cat!



This Red-tailed hawk is common all across North America and she is wearing leather jessies. Female raptors are larger than males.



This cute owl is a young Spectacled Owl that is native to Mexico and South America. He is still very fluffy with some baby down.



A Harris's Hawk. They hunt socially and are sometimes referred to as "the wolves of the sky."



This Peregrin Falcon is wearing a falconry hood to keep it calm. It is the fastest falcon as well as the fastest animal on earth. It can reach speeds up to 240 mph during a hunting dive called a stoop.



The American Kestrel is the smallest falcon species in North America. It can hover and can see ultraviolet light. The males are very different from the females in coloring. This is a female.

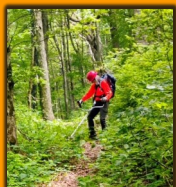


A Barn Owl. They are on every continent except Antarctica and love to eat small rodents.

Upcoming

by Ray Laws, Hiking Director

August



August 8 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. Sections 8d-e-f (Hatley Gap >>Double Hogpen Gap).

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



August 19 (Wednesday) TN/NC Maintenance Trip. Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness.

To sign-up, select the link below then scroll down a bit. Under events – select:

August JKSR Benton MacKaye Volunteer Days

[SIGN-UP HERE](#)

If you plan to use the Cherohala Meeting Location please let Jason Doroski know by email at

jasondoroski@wildernessstewards.org

August 21 (Friday) Rhododendron Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 3.6 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

August 21 (Friday) Warriors Passage. Location: Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center, departure time: 9 AM. This 6.1-mile National Recreation Trail is mostly (but not all) downhill with over a 2000' drop in elevation. We will leave cars at the bottom on Old Furnace Rd, then drive to the top of Waucheesi Bald. From there, we will hike 0.9 miles down the road to where the trail leaves the road and starts our steady and at times steep descent to Mule Pen Gap, then cross Toby Creek, Bald River Road, Wildcat Road and downhill to a crossing of Wildcat Creek, which we must wade. Sometimes we also have to wade Toby Creek. We will probably eat lunch at the Toby Creek crossing. Afterwards, we will retrieve our cars from the bald and maybe eat supper somewhere in Tellico Plains. The road up to Waucheesi Bald is in pretty bad shape, so if you plan to drive to the top, bring a 4WD high clearance vehicle. This trail is an old Cherokee Indian route over the mountains and was constructed by Boy Scout Troops out of Knoxville over 50 years ago. Those who hike it will receive a free 50-year commemorative patch. Bring lunch, water, your dog on leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org

August 26 (Wednesday) Lost Creek Section on BMT. Six miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

August 31 (Monday) Boyd's Gap to Thunder Rock Campground. Six miles mostly downhill or flat on a well-maintained trail along the Ocoee River. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

September

September 4 (Friday) Emery Creek. Moderate 5 miles. The trail for this in-and-out hike is fairly easy, but 26 stream crossings (a number up to your ankles and two around your knees), a potentially slippery rock toward the beginning and again at the end and numerous blowdowns across the trail make it more difficult than it otherwise would be. Holly and Emery Creeks, two lovely waterfalls and a beautiful trail make it worth the trouble. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

Continued next page

September 9 (Wednesday) Trails of Jack Rabbit Hayesville, North Carolina. Moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

September 11 (Friday) Ocoee area: Boyd Gap to Old Copper Road Trail to Thunder Rock Campground. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) About 5 moderate miles. Lunch by the Ocoee River. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



September 12 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA
Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.



September 16 (Wednesday) TN/NC Maintenance Trip. Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness. To sign-up, select the link then scroll down a bit. Under events – select: **September JKSR Benton MacKaye Volunteer Days** [SIGN-UP HERE](#) If you plan to use the Cherohala Meeting Location please let Jason Doroski know by email at jasondoro-ski@wildernessstewards.org

September 18 (Friday) Rocky Flats Trail. Location: Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center, departure time: 9 AM. This 5.0 mile fairly difficult hike takes us to the old Hollinghead place at Rocky Flats with still standing chimneys. This is a mile into the hike off Doublecamp Creek Road bordering the Citico Creek Wilderness. Then the trail courses up and down around various ridges and ends up at Warden Fields. Afterwards, we will retrieve our vehicles at the starting trailhead and drive back to Tellico Plains for possible supper somewhere. This hike is in the Citico Creek Wilderness therefore we must limit the hike to 12 folks. What to bring: lunch, water, your dog on leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org.

September 21 (Monday) Thunder Rock Express to BMT.
Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

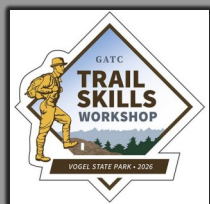
September 29 (Tuesday) Gahuti Lite: Five intersecting trails loop at Fort Mountain State Park. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). About 5 moderate miles. Highlights include cascading creeks, a long-distance view and a lakeside walk. Ends with a moderate uphill walk. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

October



On October 3, 2026, at 1PM there will be a Celebration of Life for Joe Cantwell at The Gilmer Arts Center in Ellijay, Georgia.

October 5 (Monday) Thunder Rock Campground to Rhododendron Trail to Chestnut Ridge to Bear Paw and return. Five miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.



Trails Skill Workshop Vogel State Park October 9-11, 2026

To register, follow this link:

[TSW 2026 Registration](#)

October 9 (Friday) Shady Falls Trailhead to Lake Blue Ridge and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 6 miles. Views of Lake Blue Ridge, including very close up during mid-hike lunch. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



October 10 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

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

October 16 (Friday) BMT Tellico River to Campsite 11 on Bald River Road. Location: Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center, departure time: 9 AM. This 7-mile hike begins at the Fish Hatchery on Tellico River Rd above Green Cove on the BMT, climbs up Sugar Mountain then down the south side into the valley of the Upper Bald River Wilderness. Once it crosses Brookshire Creek above a small waterfall, we will leave the BMT and continue to follow the Brookshire Creek Trail downstream to come out onto Bald River Road at Campsite 11. There are six stream crossings, so either wear shoes you don't mind getting wet or plan on changing into water shoes at each stream crossing. Since this trail is partly in Wilderness, it will be limited to 12 hikers. Afterwards, we will retrieve our shuttle vehicles and perhaps eat supper in Tellico Plains. What to bring: lunch, water, wading shoes, your dog on leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org

October 26 (Monday) Yonah Preserve, 5miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

October 30 (Friday) BMT: Highway 515 to Weaver Creek and return. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy 5 miles mostly along dirt roads. One "rock hopping" stream crossing could get your feet wet depending on stream levels and recent rainfall. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

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

**The deadline for the September Newsletter is Wednesday, September 2.
Thank you!**

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