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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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JUNE 2026

A Biography of Laura and Bill Hodge and a History of SAWS

by Richard Harris

This is the life story of two friends of mine whom I have known since around 2009. This couple contributed to the preservation of Wilderness, not just here in East Tennessee, but all over the Appalachians and even far out West.

Bill Hodge was born in Romney, West Virginia, on a family farm, a farm which has been in the family since 1763. His mother was a teacher, and his father was a plastics engineer in Evansville, Indiana. They met at 15th and E Street in Washington, DC, at a USO dance when Bill's father was in the Navy.

Laura Hodge (Dannheiser) was born in Madisonville, Kentucky. She attended the University of Kentucky and has been entrepreneurial her whole life, something that she developed by running several family businesses with her parents.



Bill and Laura Hodge

Bill began college at Purdue University, majoring in Forestry, but transferred to the University of Evansville and graduated with a degree in telecommunications. He became a radio broadcaster and eventually worked in radio advertising in Evansville where he met Laura in 1992 across the river in Henderson, Kentucky, when Bill sold her advertising. They married, eventually moving to Salisbury/Ocean City, Maryland, then Jackson, Tennessee to follow Bill's career. In 1999, they moved to Coker Creek a few months after Bill secured a position in college athletics, working for Action Sports Media, handling marketing for 17 various universities across the country including the University of Tennessee. Having been a key part of the company's growth, Bill eventually became the Chief Marketing Officer of Action Sports Media. Bill was instrumental in moving the company to Alcoa, Tennessee in 2005 and growing the company to over 16 million in annual sales. The company sold in 2008.

After many years in corporate America, Bill wanted the second half of his career to “make a difference”. Living in the Cherokee National Forest, Bill became interested in the hiking trails in the area. On Bill’s birthday, April 16, 2009, he hiked from Waucheesi Bald down to Sandy Gap on the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), then down the Kirkland Creek Trail to Holly Flats Campground, where Laura picked him up. With that trip, he fell in love with hiking in Wilderness Areas, specifically the Cherokee National Forest area around the Bald River. He learned of Tennessee Wild (TNWild) and Jeff Hunter through Facebook and joined with Jeff Hunter in his campaign to push forward designation of the Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area as actual Wilderness. Laura also became very involved with TNWild. TNWild was working closely with Lamar Alexander, Bob Corker and other politicians on this project.

Laura and Bill were heavily into nature photography and bought the Coker Creek Gallery, where they displayed and sold their works. Finding that running the gallery required them to physically be at the gallery led to their selling the gallery so they could pursue their interests in the TNWild Wilderness Campaign and other endeavors.

Bill began volunteering with our Thursday Trail Crew with me, Ken Jones and others. He soon learned that there were a lot of pushbacks to Wilderness designation, even among trail maintainers such as us. If these areas became Wilderness, then we would have to maintain these trails with Wilderness tools (crosscut saws, loppers, sling blades) rather than chainsaws and gas-powered brush cutters. Also, the local hunters would not be allowed to ride their 4-wheelers into these areas and set up camp, cutting firewood with chainsaws. They would have to pack in all their gear on their backs. The politicians began receiving pleas from constituents to not allow the Tennessee Wilderness Bill to move forward.

One of the first times, if not the first, that Bill used a crosscut saw was in 2009 when he joined me and Ken Jones on my section of the BMT from Sugar Mountain to Brookshire Creek one rainy day. We cut several trees with a crosscut saw in a continuous downpour. In spite of the adverse weather, Bill fell in love with crosscut saws. The rest is history. Soon after, he participated in the project of clearing hundreds of trees off the trails in the Cohutta Wilderness following a major wind event. There he really learned to use a crosscut saw.

Bill became a contractor for TNWild to reach out to the various maintainer clubs to document their concerns over Wilderness designation. He met with members of numerous clubs, including the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA). He also met with clubs up in Northeast Tennessee which would be impacted if the Big Laurel Branch and Sampson Mountain areas became Wilderness.

Bill decided to address these concerns by speaking with these folks to better understand why they did not support Wilderness designation. Among the maintainers, the fear was the extra work which would be required to maintain trails in the Wilderness. There were not enough maintainers who owned crosscuts. Few people knew how to sharpen crosscut saws or even how to use them efficiently and safely.



What some perceived as a chainsaw requiring five minutes of saw work to clear a blowdown might require 30 minutes to do the same with a crosscut saw, though the true work was in developing the local human capacity to do the work. These concerns, Bill discovered, were legitimate concerns.

The Tennessee Eastman Hiking & Canoe Club was responsible for maintaining a segment of the Appalachian Trail which would be directly impacted if the area they maintained became Wilderness, so they too were very much opposed to the Wilderness bill. Bill became an Appalachian (AT) Maintainer for the Tennessee Eastman group, maintaining a seven-mile section of the AT between the Vandeventer and Iron Mountain Shelters. He put boots on the ground, so to speak, to better connect with those concerned with the Wilderness campaign, and to provide a much-needed service to the AT. Bill also volunteered as a section maintainer for the BMT on the four-mile Brookshire Creek Section.

To address trail stewardship concerns, Bill, the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition and The Wilderness Society (TWS) convened the Wilderness Trails Summit at Montreat in July of 2010. They invited trail clubs, agency staff and conservation leaders for an in-depth conversation about the stewardship needs of trails in the Southeast. The primary topics were who was going to maintain these Wilderness areas and “where are the young people?” (almost all trail maintainers were retired). There were 30-40 maintainer clubs represented, including the still dissatisfied Tennessee Eastman Hiking and Canoe Club. Near the end of this one-day summit Bill presented the room with the idea of a new organization with a sole focus on stewardship of the Wilderness of Southern Appalachia and with that Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) was born.

Soon after the summit, on November 1, 2010, Bill moved to working under contract for TWS as the founder of the SAWS program. He developed bylaws, recruited an advisory board and moved forward with strong support from TWS, Regional Director Brent Martin in particular. SAWS became a program within TWS in the spring of 2011 and would remain so until December of 2014 when the organization became its own 501c3 chartered non-profit.

The first Wilderness Skills Institute (WSI), developed by SAWS, the United States Forest Service and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to develop Wilderness stewardship capacity, was held in 2011 at the Ocoee Work Center. It was a significant part of the SAWS program objective to teach Wilderness maintainer skills. The WSI has been held annually since then, now at the Cradle of Forestry in the Pisgah National Forest near Brevard, North Carolina. Each year this two-week long series of course offerings provide free instruction in crosscut saw use and sharpening, rock work, bridge construction and other general Wilderness skills. Each year about 200 folks attend these courses.

SAWS has grown into a model of effective public land stewardship with a staff of 70+ employees across six states with offices in Asheville, Johnson City and Roanoke. The programs at SAWS include working with communities developing support for the trails and organizing volunteer days, hiring Wilderness Specialists to develop and implement Wilderness management and education plans, collecting field data, writing technical documents and supporting other activities in Wilderness as needed as well as the deployment of several professional trail crews. They also hire Wilderness Rangers who are out on the trails meeting with hikers and backpackers to discuss Leave No Trace (LNT) and to help where needed.



Perhaps Bill understood the “stubbornness of a mule!”

From the start in 2011 through 2018 the organization remained an integral part of moving forward with the Tennessee Wild mission, the passage of The Tennessee Wilderness Act. Trail maintainers were not the only groups with concerns about the legislation that would designate 20,000 acres of the Cherokee National Forest as Wilderness.

Among hunters, the concerns of easy access were part of the problem. Some hunters would not listen to the facts and were sure Wilderness designation would shut them out of hunting in these new Wilderness areas, a totally unfounded concern. But these hunters sent letters to the politicians and were very vocal in their concerns. As tensions increased and misinformation was spread about impacts on hunting, personal threats were made. This resulted eventually in some locals, presumably the same folks who were so adamantly against the Wilderness designation, shooting up the SAWS building in Coker Creek in 2016. As a result, Bill and Laura moved to Asheville, North Carolina to set up SAWS in a more friendly environment.

Some loggers were also against the Wilderness designation since it would prevent any further logging in the newly designated Wilderness areas and some loggers also took offence to the name SAWS, saying “saws were their tools”.

In 2018 the Tennessee Wilderness Act passed as part of the Farm Bill, designating the Upper Bald River Wilderness Area and expanding the Big Frog, Little Frog and Joyce Kilmer Wilderness areas. Areas up in northeast Tennessee were included in the bill, including the Big Laurel Branch and the Sampson Mountain areas. The areas in northeast Tennessee were only included after the Tennessee Eastman switched to supporting the legislation because of the work of SAWS. Laura was proud to be the campaign director that completed the journey for Wilderness protection so many had contributed to for over a decade.

Soon after the Tennessee Wilderness Act was passed, Bill was offered the job as Executive Director of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation and they moved to Montana in May of 2019. Then in 2023, after having grown the capacity for Wilderness work in another corner of the country, Bill returned to The Wilderness Society as the Montana State Director.

In September of 2025 the Hodges organized a new company, Wild Idea Media and the weekly Wild Idea Podcast which Bill co-hosts with Anders Reynolds, a longtime friend and Executive Director of the Wilderness Land Trust. The podcast delves into issues revolving around Wilderness and connecting people to public lands in general.

So, since 2009 Bill and Laura have continually been advocating for Wilderness and our public lands in a very effective manner. They are truly an amazing couple. Check out The Wild Idea at www.thewildidea.com.



What's a Feasibility Study Mr Bones?



Mr Bones, “Tiny Sasquatch we need to spread the word about need for everyone to contact their Senator to bring the House Bill to consideration. This bill calls for feasibility study to be done in order for the quest for National Scenic Trails to move forward.”

Tiny Sasquatch, “Mr Bones, what is a feasibility study?”

Mr Bones, “The primary purpose of a Feasibility Study is to determine “long-distance trail viability”. The federal agency conducting the study evaluates whether the proposed NST has scenic, historic, natural and cultural features that qualify it for NST designation. Equally important, this evaluation also considers the ability of the nonprofit trail organization to sustainably manage and maintain the trail as well as the strength of its partnership with the federal agency administering the trail.

Tiny Sasquatch, “I am contacting my Senator right now and then I am calling my cousin Big Foot to do the same!”



National Scenic Trail Quest

Our Bill Passed the House!
Now it's on to the Senate.

Please contact your Senators to bring the
House Bill before the Senate for consideration

Go to [CONTACT](#) to learn how to contact your Senators.

Grassroots Support WORKS!

Teamwork

by Bob Cowdrick with photos courtesy of Kathy Gushwa



Some logs don't move themselves.

This picture says something powerful about a group of people working together toward a common goal.

Rolling this log took teamwork, communication, trust, and a willingness for everyone to do their part. No one person could accomplish it alone, but together the task became possible.

Whether on a trail project, leading a hike, or staffing a festival, success often comes from BMTA members combining their strengths and supporting one another along the way.

Teamwork not only gets the job done — it builds friendships, shared purpose, and lasting memories!

One goal. One team. One result.



In addition to this log rolled off the trail the team cleared four blowdowns and almost three miles of brush and well as some waterway cleaning.

Hike the Hills in Tennessee

BMTA Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

November 5 - 8, 2026

Copperhill, Tennessee

Paddle to the Ghost Town of

Caney Creek & Explore

Rating: Easy - Moderate

Benton Falls (65 feet high) and

Lake McCamy Trail on

Chilhowee Mountain

Rating: Easy / 3.4 miles

Scenic Spur Waterfall Trail

Rating: Moderate / 3.4 miles.

Brush Creek Trail

Rating: Easy - Moderate / 2-mile loop, 4-mile loop, or 6.8-mile shuttle

Newly Opened Lost Creek

Waterfall Trail

Rating: Moderate / 2.24 miles

Clear Creek Trail

Rating: Moderate / 5.4 miles

Rhododendron Trail with option

to include Bear Paw Trail

Rating: Easy-Moderate / 2 or 3.7 miles

Big Frog Trail

Rating: Strenuous / 12 miles

BMT along Lost Creek

Rating: Moderate / 6 miles

BMT & Rock Creek Trails

Rating: Moderate-Strenuous / 7.6 miles

Abandoned Trail to BMT to

The Narrows

Rating: Moderate / 5 miles

Boyd Gap down to Old Copper

Road Trail to Ocoee

Whitewater Center

Rating: Moderate / 6 miles

BMT from Childers Creek to Big Bend with option to Towee Creek

Rating: moderate / 3 or 4.2 miles.

Copper Basin Museum Outside

Tour and Ducktown Trail

Rating: Easy / 1.5 miles

BMT to Thunder Rock Express

Loop Trail

Rating: Moderate / 5 miles

Turtletown Creek Falls

Rating: Moderate / 5 miles.

Go to [HIKE THE HILLS](#) for hike descriptions.

Flats Mountain Hike

by Rick Harris with photos courtesy of Brenda Harris

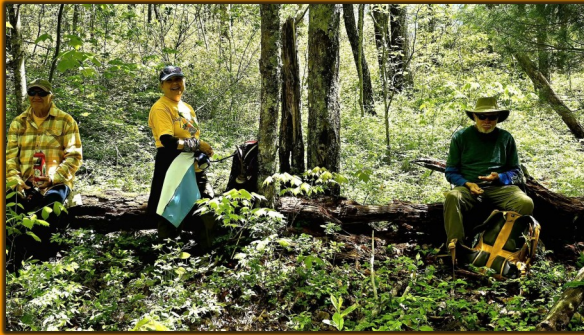


Five of us hiked the Flats Mountain Trail on a beautiful and cool day.

We met at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center, then carpoled to the lower trail-head leaving two cars there, then up to the upper trail-head off the Cherohala Skyway at mile 19.

We hiked this beautiful trail, but it does need brushing out. There were minimal stepover logs.

We ate lunch at the gap at mile 3.0. The trail has significant ups and downs, but for the most part it is downhill, dropping over 2000'.



With the leaves just now budding out at this high altitude, we were able to see the surrounding mountain ridges and the lakes in the Tennessee River and Little Tennessee River Basins. We also could see the lake at the Indian Boundary Recreation Area.

Afterwards, we all met at the Cherohala Outpost along the Skyway to check out the new store and restaurant there, then went down to the Tellico Brewery for beers and lots of chatter as well as food from the Peach Street Grill. We all broke up to return to our homes around 6 PM.



Joint GA/TN/NC Maintenance Trip

Photos courtesy of Clare Sullivan and Kathy Gushwa



Widening the trail.



Steve Pruett drills steps into place.



Marty Dominy makes a difference.

Continued next page



Shelton Crow



The day's lunch spot! Water release at Tapoco Lodge.



Daphne Martin knows that this is the best workplace ever!

“We Can Take It!”

Civilian Conservation Corps Day at Vogel State Park

by Kathy Williams

Vogel State Park hosted an in-depth celebration of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) with history, stories, CCC enrollee impressions as well as demonstrations of the tools used by the CCC. The event was outside of the John B. Derden Civilian Conservatoria Corps Museum at Vogel State Park.

There was a fact sheet of the CCC accomplishments available that informed and stunned! Here are just a few.

- ◆ 3,000,000 participants (250,000 African-Americans, 18,000 Native Americans on their reservations, 9,000 single women in “She, She, She” Camps).
- ◆ Known as “Roosevelt’s Tree Army” since they planted 3 Billion trees!
- ◆ Motto-”We Can Take It!”
- ◆ They hand-dug Lake Trahlyta! 22 acres with a depth of 42 feet! The rock from the lake construction was used to build the dam, cabins, Visitor's Center, Walasi-Yi Inn and the AT shelter on Blood Mountain!

Some fun facts:

- ◆ Built 1865 drinking fountains.
- ◆ Consumed 5,625,000 pounds of potatoes in 30 days.
- ◆ Consumed 9,000,000 eggs in 30 days



Roy Taylor with Mike Oliver as Mike talks about the Pulaski and its history.



Some of the tools used by the CCC.



Roy Taylor and a very heavy tool!

From the John B. Derden Civilian Conservation Corps Museum at Vogel State Park.



CCC bunk and trunk.



The typical CCC uniform.



The tree in the museum fireplace, a symbol of the CCC also known as "Roosevelt's Tree Army".



Each enrollee received \$30 a month and "three hots and a flop" meaning three hot meals and a bed. \$25 went back home to the enrollee's family.



The museum really put you back into time and what the country was experiencing.

Hike Leader Ralph Collinson Leads the Way!

Photos courtesy of Ralph Collinson and Penny Strickland



Seeking Gold on the Goldmine Trail at Smithgall Woods?

Kathy Gushwa Has No Fear of “The Heart of Darkness!”



Kathy Gushwa is the lady on the right. She led this work trip after adopting the “Heart of Darkness” in late 2025 after nobody had adopted it for several years.

Three BMTA guys assisted her. They went halfway and cleaned the campsite on May 27, 2026.

Photo courtesy of Greg Trotnic and story from Steve Dennison.

Benton MacKaye Loses Several of Our Old Guard

by Darcy Douglas

This spring has seen the loss of three people who gave of their time, energy and expertise “back in the day”.

Bill Porter served as Treasurer, President and Trail Maintainer. He helped move us into the electronic age during his period as Treasurer as home computers were becoming more common. He was a strong but kind leader as President who could bring people together. I well remember Board meetings, held in an evening after work in those days, where it was obvious that his business background was serving him well managing people. He was able to bring people together in a forward-thinking way. Bill had a huge library and sold books at one point. He had a room dedicated to backpacking/hiking/trail tool storage in his home! He later became very active in the bicycling community in Atlanta. Bill did bring Judith and his sons on the trail with him when possible. He is remembered very fondly by those of us who worked with him on the trails and on the Board.

Tom Reilly was also a Maintainer and served on the Board in several capacities, including Newsletter Editor. We had begun to use computers to generate newsletters by then but still had some stages using what was called “clip art” to be added by hand. Tom enjoyed that very much! My children have a fond memory of him working on a section in the Cohutta Wilderness one hot July day. Tom had removed his hat because of the heat and many gnats drowned in the perspiration. Tom’s wife clogged with another of our Presidents, Ted Reissing, so his family was also part of us. He had a wholesome love of life and the trail which continually amazed me after learning what he had endured in Vietnam.

Bill Hamrick also served as a Trail Maintainer on the BMT. He was also a regular on monthly work trips. He served as Registrar at Kennesaw State University (College in those days) and a succession of professors and other staff from KSU were brought along as members and maintainers because of Bill. After retiring, Bill volunteered with the National Park Service, serving in administrative positions at Yellowstone National Park, among others. When Bill was maintaining trail, we each blazed our own sections. He is one of the few who honored my request to return templates when they were no longer being used. I treasure it today as it is part of my training sessions.

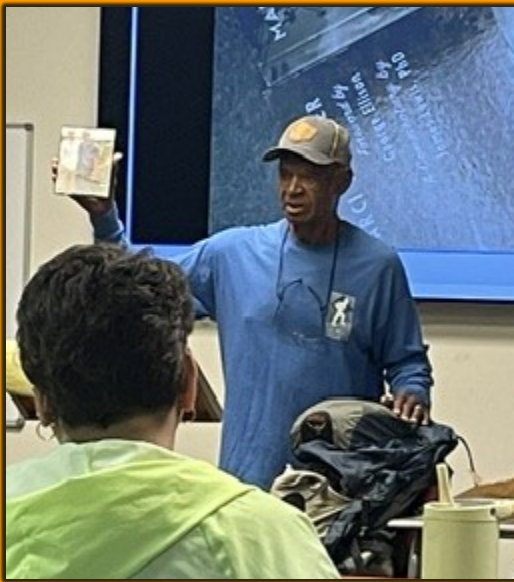
These three men are missed. Their contributions to the building of our trail and to the first 20 years of our organization made a real difference! Today we have more people to share the various tasks, but when these gentlemen (and they all were most definitely that) were active, we all did many different things to make it work. I feel honored to have known and worked with them and know many others from those days share those feelings.



Water and Mountains

by Kathy Williams with photos courtesy of Liz Henderson and Mary Dunkle

George Owen’s Hiking in the Southern Appalachians class continued throughout May with guest speakers Chuck Logan and Darcy Douglas. Chuck Logan has hiked the Appalachian Trail and brought his backpack to show how he organized his hike with the barest of essentials. Darcy Douglas spoke on the water activities in the area and how to be safe. George covered Leave No Trace Principals and the various designations of Wilderness, National Recreation Areas, National Scenic Areas and more. After class hikes were always the icing on the cake!



Chuck Logan speaking on the bare essentials of thru hiking.



Here the class is about to take off on some hikes in the Standing Indian Campground area. The Hike Leader was Michael O'Brian.



George connecting with his "Inner Trail Troll."



Bridge made from a fallen log.



The Miller Trek Trail at Brasstown.

BMTA Festing at Trout Fest



Patrick Ward makes sure the log stays in place.



Is this a future sawyer in the making!?

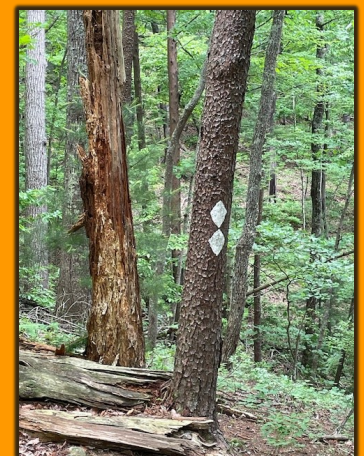
At Trout Fest the day started off with a little drizzling rain and temperatures in the high 50's. As the day progressed the bright sunshine and scattered showers seemed to take turns in full display. Mother Nature couldn't quite make up her mind what she wanted to do. Even with questionable weather there were good crowds displaying high spirits when visiting the BMTA booth. We were able to answer many questions about the Benton MacKaye Trail and other local trails as well. We had visitors from as far away as Arizona and New York State. Over 24 visitors signed up to receive the BMTA monthly newsletter. Betty Ann Archer, Liz Henderson and Tom Atcheson stayed dry while manning the information tent while Patrick Ward, Barry Allen, Will Kirchoffer and Cal Mittag braved the weather in the crosscut demonstration area. As usual, the crosscut proved to be a popular activity for many festival visitors. It was an extra delight watching the younger kids' faces and smiles as they cut through the logs. **Thank you!**

Arts in the Park Festival

A big **Thank You** to Betty Ann Archer, Ken Cissna, Will Kirchoffer, Samuel Sly and Kelly Wentworth for volunteering at the BMTA Booth at Spring Arts in the Park.

You endured heavy rain on Saturday that really put a damper on the festival until the sun finally broke out around noon. You exemplified the hiking spirit and did not let a little rain spoil your enthusiasm for the BMT.

You are the best!



Conservation Corner

by Darcy Douglas, Conservation Chair

LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES, NUMBER THREE

Some people think it is fine to leave dog feces beside the trail, but I learned that since they eat “human made food”, any wild animal coming across their feces can be harmed because of the differences from their regular diet. Others feel they can leave some food waste in the forest, perhaps not realizing that animals who eat our food waste become acclimated to human food, therefore possibly a danger to us at some point. A BMT hiker experienced this a few weeks ago – a group of bears stayed in his campsite for hours, even though his food, toothpaste, etc., were properly stowed. Bears who have become interested in human food usually end up killed by our USFS and Park Service Rangers. I borrowed the following from the Pacific Crest Trail because these points also apply in our well-treed forests.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly

Improper disposal of food, trash, urine, feces, and wastewater spreads disease, changes the habits of wildlife, and spoils the scenery.

- Pack it in, pack it out. Don't burn, bury, or leave any litter (which includes food, nut shells, fruit peels, paper or cigarette butts).
- If an outdoor toilet (privy) is available, use it, but leave only human waste and toilet paper there – nothing else. Pack out disposable wipes and feminine hygiene products.
- If there is no privy, bury feces in a hole six to eight inches deep and at least 200 feet (80 steps) away from campsites, trails and water. Or better yet, do it miles away from camp and water. Don't hide your waste under a rock; it won't decompose quickly there. Pack out your toilet paper; animals may dig it up.
- In special conditions pack out human waste. This is especially important in certain places such as the Mt. Whitney region, or during winter when deep snow prevents digging down to the soil.
- Disperse urine, toothpaste, cooking water and strained dishwater at least 200 feet away from campsites so the soil is not polluted, and so wildlife won't be attracted by the odors and become pests.
- Wash dishes, bodies, and clothing 200 feet away from water sources. Eliminate or minimize any use of soap. Dishwater can often be avoided by making a drink of the boiled water used to clean out the remnants of your meal from your bowl or cup.



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.*

Upcoming

by Ray Laws, Hiking Director

June

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 BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. **There will be only ONE work trip in June. It will be a joint trip on June 27, 2026.** Tentatively on Section 8 (Bushy Head Gap >> Dyer Gap). Watch your email for details.

Contact: BMTA GA Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org or the BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@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 Slick-rock Wilderness therefore, we must limit it to 12 hikers. What to bring: food, water, your dog on a leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org



June 27 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. **There will be only ONE work trip in June. It will be a joint trip on June 27, 2026.** Tentatively on Section 8 (Bushy Head Gap >> Dyer Gap). Watch your email for details.

Contact: BMTA GA Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org or the BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

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

July

July 10 (Friday) BMT: Lost Creek Section. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy 6 miles. Beautiful walk along Big Lost Creek. One stream crossing will probably get your feet a little wet so come prepared. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org



July 11 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

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

July 17 (Friday) Bob Bald, Location: Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center, Time 9:00 AM. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. This 7.0 mile somewhat difficult iconic hike takes us from Beech Gap at the State Line on the Cherohala Skyway up 900' to the summit of Bob Bald, with its iconic views mostly to the south and east. In the distance we can see the Skyway wind on its way toward Robbinsville. We will eat lunch at the top, then return the way we came. We can plan to eat supper at one of the restaurants in Tellico Plains or maybe just get ice cream at the Tellico Beach Drive-In. What to bring: food, water, your dog on a leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org

July 20 (Monday) BMT in Cherry Log to the chapel, small lake and to the shelter and back. Moderate 4-miles through Sisson property. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

July 24 (Friday) Cartecay River Loop Trails. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5-6 miles, much of it along the beautiful Cartecay River. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org



July 25 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact:

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

July 27 (Monday) Boyd's Gap to Thunder Rock Campground 6 miles mostly downhill or flat on a well-maintained trail along the Ocoee River. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

August

August 1 (Saturday) Bear Creek Trail. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 7 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org



August 8 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA
Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

August 18 (Tuesday) 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.

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

August 26 (Wednesday) Lost River Trail. 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.

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

The deadline for the July Newsletter is Wednesday, July 1, 2026. Thank you!

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