



<http://www.bmta.org/>

## Points of Interest

Click the title to go directly to the page.

[Climbing That Mountain](#)

[Banff Film Festival](#)

["Peak Baggin Culture"](#)

[Cow Camp/Bald River](#)

[Valentine's Day Maintenance](#)

[Open Arms Outreach](#)

[Old Dutch Settlement](#)

[Getting it Done in Tennessee](#)

["OH WOW"](#)

[BRRR Hike Inn](#)

[Upcoming](#)



## BMTA Officers 2025-2026

**President:** Bob Cowdrick  
**Vice President:** Kelly Wentworth  
**Secretary:** Jessie Hayden  
**Treasurer:** Suzie Mayes  
**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 3

MARCH 2026

## Climbing That Mountain

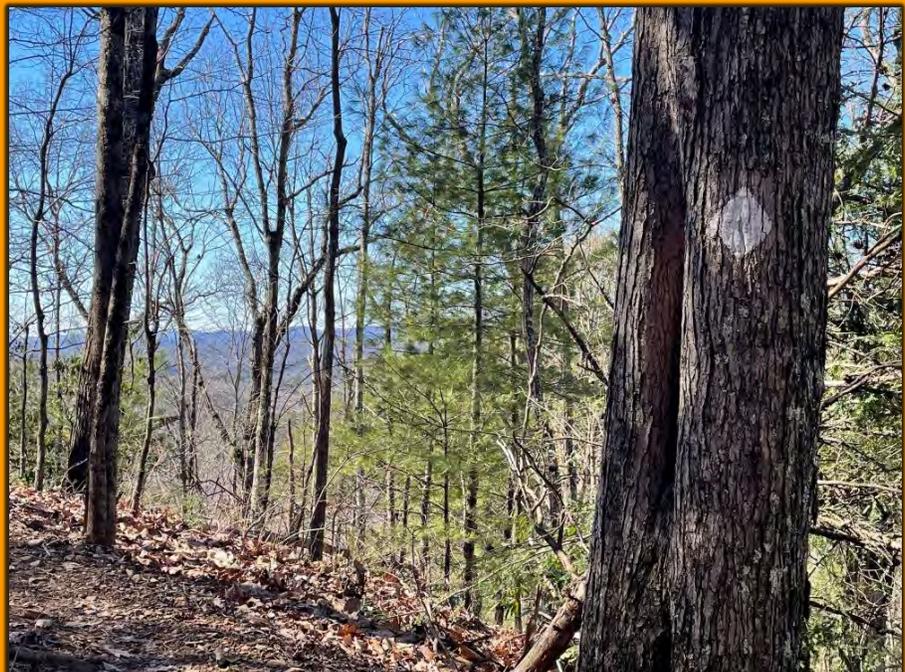
by Joy Forehand

On March 5, 2026, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association celebrated the successful passage by unanimous consent of the H.R. 2768 Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2025, as amended, out of the House Committee on Natural Resources. The amendment requires the feasibility study to be completed within two years. (The Senate version required a one-year study.)

This is another step forward towards permanent protection for the 288-mile Benton MacKaye Trail. The bill, sponsored by Representatives Chuck Fleischmann (TN), Steve Cohen (GA), Chuck Edwards (NC), and Lucy McBath (GA) passed the committee by unanimous consent. The Senate now will need to approve the amended version of the bill.

"We are grateful for the leadership from Representatives Fleischmann, Cohen, Edwards, and McBath for advancing legislation to protect the Benton MacKaye Trail and set it on the path to becoming our country's 12th National Scenic Trail. The Senate now will need to approve the amended version of the bill," said Bob Cowdrick, President of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association.

A National Scenic Trail (NST) designation will ensure this trail is protected for future generations and remains a premier recreation destination for hikers while expanding its positive economic impact on nearby communities.



Continued next page

Ninety-five percent of the 288-mile-long Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), which traverses three states, already is on public land. One hundred seventy-three of those miles pass through six Wilderness Areas as well as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park which is maintained as Wilderness. Those 173 miles already enjoy the enhanced protection provided by the 1968 Wilderness Act for Wilderness Areas. If the BMT is designated as a NST, the rest of the trail will have much-needed extra protection.

Managed either by the Forest Service (USFS) or by the National Park Service (NPS), the trail's working relationship with the USFS and NPS will be made even stronger by an NST designation for the trail. A detailed study of issues on the trail and potential future remedies and opportunities will be proposed.

The trail's corridor will be monitored for viewshed protection. As an NST, BMTA will be eligible to receive funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The BMT could utilize these resources to acquire land from *willing* sellers to increase protection along the trail's corridor.

The NST designation will provide enhanced environmental and wildlife-related protections as well as habitat management. The natural character of the trail will be preserved.

The impact of visitors to the trail would be monitored. Events would be regulated so both participants and non-participants traverse the trail safely with minimal impact to the trail while they enjoy the journey.

The already popular BMT draws more than 60,000 hikers annually. An NST designation will increase that number significantly. Those hikers will visit nearby communities to purchase even more goods and services.

Studies show trails can increase the value of nearby residential and commercial properties, leading to higher local tax revenues. Trails make it more attractive for new residents, remote workers, and small businesses focused on outdoor recreation.

The influx of hikers, their friends and families will increase the demand for outfitters, guides, shuttle services, hostels, campgrounds and hospitality services will lead to new patrons and jobs – a boon for existing local businesses.

To learn more about BMTA's quest for National Scenic Trail designation for the BMT, go to [NST](#).

## There's something about a Saturday on the BMT that just feels right.

by Bob Cowdrick

This past Saturday 12 BMTA members and guests spent the day working on a 4-mile section of the Benton MacKaye Trail from Coker Creek to TN Hwy 68. We brushed back the overgrowth, cleared multiple blowdowns with chain saws, and improved the tread to make the path safer and more sustainable for everyone who follows.

It wasn't glamorous work. It was sweaty. It was muddy. And it was absolutely worth it.

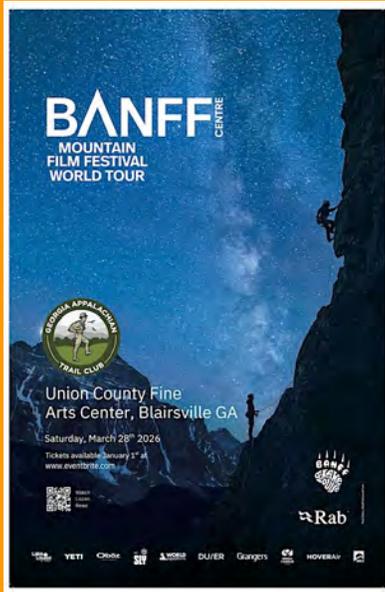
Volunteers are the backbone of the BMT's success. Every safe step a hiker takes, every family memory made in these mountains, every quiet moment beside a creek — it's all made possible because someone showed up with gloves, tools, and a servant's heart.



What I love most about these work trips isn't just the progress we make. It's the camaraderie. Twelve people, different backgrounds and stories, united in a common mission: to leave the trail better than we found it. A sustainable, safe trail doesn't happen by accident. It happens because volunteers care enough to make it happen.

Grateful to be part of a community that believes in stewardship, hard work, and "leaving a footprint for generations to follow."

## Banff Film Festival Returns to Blairsville, March 28



The internationally famous Banff Film Festival returns for the second year with a new lineup of outdoor films for this year on Saturday afternoon, March 28, at the Union County Fine Arts Center in Blairsville, Georgia.

- ◆ Doors open at 1:00 PM
- ◆ Showings start at 2:00 PM.
- ◆ Basic entrance fee is \$25.

Click [HERE](#) for tickets

## New Superintendent for Great Smoky Mountains National Park



**Charles Sellars**  
NPS Photo

Charles Sellars has been selected to officially serve as superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park after being the acting superintendent for more than a year. He has extensive experience with the National Park Service and previously worked as deputy chief of facility management at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Sellars started his National Park Service career in 1985 around the East Tennessee region, where he worked as a temporary engineering draftsman at the Blue Ridge Parkway. He would go on to serve in multiple positions at the park, including Maintenance Mechanic Supervisor within the parkway's Pisgah District.

He also served as chief of facility management at three parks: Bandelier National Monument, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Outer Banks National Parks Group of North Carolina (managing facilities at three parks). In 2022, he was named superintendent of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve in West Virginia.

## 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](mailto:djones@bmta.org).



## The March BMT Blog Is Here *'The BMT as a Counterpoint to "Peak Bagging" Culture'*

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



Hmmm. If they weren't smiling these guys would be rather scary to encounter on the trail! Quick crosscut work by Joe Cantwell and Kees DeVante. They covered the entire length of Section 10b—Jacks River to Hemp Top and access routes for five miles total from Daily Gap and two cuts on blowdowns in slightly over two hours!

## Cow Camp / Bald River Trails Hike

by Rick Harris

Twenty members of the BMTA and/or the Cherokee Hiking Club joined us on a five-mile hike on the Cow Camp and Bald River Trails. We met at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 10 AM accompanied by sunshine and warm temperatures. After sign-ins, we carpoled to the Baby Falls Picnic Area to start our hike. Prior to hiking, Rick Harris discussed the origin of the name Cow Camp, the logging operations along the Bald River and the designation of the Bald River Gorge Wilderness and Wilderness in general, as well as the origin of the SAWS (Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards) in the Tellico Plains / Coker Creek area.

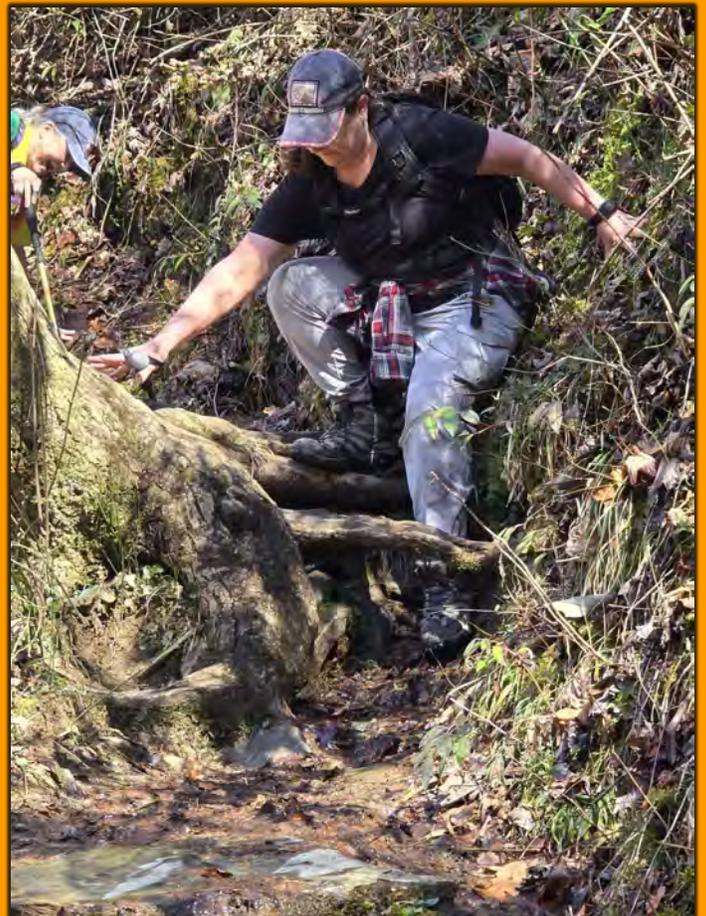
We broke into two groups to meet the group size requirements for Wilderness. Rick Harris led the first group, and Otis Pannell led the second group. We hiked up the road along the Tellico River to the Cow Camp Trailhead, then up the Cow Camp Trail to the top of the ridge at the intersection with the Henderson Mountain Trail, then down the back side to the Bald River Trail. From there, we turned upstream to the Papaw Branch crossing where we ate lunch. We then returned down the trail to the Bald River Falls parking area, then upstream on the road back to the Baby Falls Picnic Area. Once we all got back to the parking area, we drove to Tellico Plains and 15 of us ate an early supper at Senor Lopez Mexican Restaurant.



The start was the easy part!



Part of the Cow Camp Trail is in a creek!



Some sections of the trail required patience and diligence!



The two groups crossed paths momentarily, said hi ,then went their separate ways.

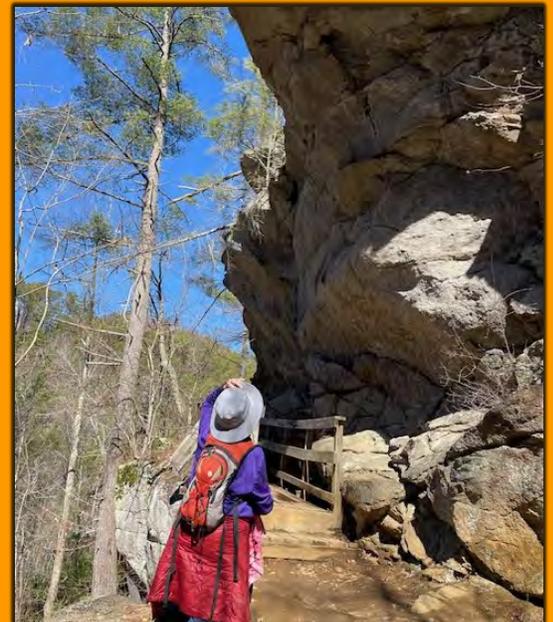


This stunning rock formation gave a new perspective to one's place in nature.

The weather could not have been better. And the water level in the rivers and Papaw Branch were high, adding to the beauty of the hike. Now, for some history which was discussed by Rick Harris at the Baby Falls Picnic Area and along the way.

**Origin of the Cow Camp Trail Name:** Back in the mid-1800s, farmers would take their cattle to higher elevations during the summer to avoid the heat down in the lowlands. The ridgeline along Henderson Mountain, accessed via the Cow Camp Trail, was one such spot.

**Logging in the Bald River Gorge:** The Babcock Lumber Company owned these lands and built a narrow gauge railroad up the gorge to aid in the logging of the area in the early 1900s. Eight Shey engines built by the Lima Locomotive Company in Lima, OH, were owned by the lumber company and were designed to climb 10% grades and to use a cogwheel if needed for steeper climbs. The rail line actually crossed over the river just above the falls and crossed the river a total of 18 times up through the gorge. The logs were transported to Tellico Plains for processing at the large lumber yard. Then the finished boards were transported mostly to Chattanooga for further distribution. The Bald River Trail follows the railroad grade when on the east side of the river, but new trail was constructed by the CCC to connect segments where the rail line was on the west side of the river. The trail is five miles long, ending at Bald River Road near the Holly Flats campground.



Views from the top of Bald River Falls.

**Discussion of Wilderness and the Wilderness Act of 1964:** President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act on September 3, 1964, finalizing a multi-year effort by conservationists around the country and members of the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club to protect public lands threatened by logging and mining interests as well as others who wanted to purchase and develop public lands for personal gain. Two of the better-known members of The Wilderness Society were Benton MacKaye (founder of the AT) as well as Harvey Broome from Knoxville. The principal author of the Wilderness Act was Howard Zahniser, president of The Wilderness Society, and the most famous quote from the act was his definition of Wilderness as below:

*"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." – Howard Zahniser*

**Per the Wilderness Act**, land eligible for Wilderness designation was defined as land chosen from existing federal lands owned by the USFS, NPS, and FWS (Fish and Wildlife Service) meeting the following criteria:

- ◆ Minimal human imprint
- ◆ Opportunities for unconfined recreation
- ◆ At least five thousand acres
- ◆ Educational, scientific, scenic or historical value
- ◆ Have no commercial enterprises within them or any motorized travel or other form of mechanical transport (e.g., vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles).



**Bald River Falls**

**Section 4** of the act lists what usage is not allowed on land protected by the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), as follows:

- ◆ Use of a motor vehicle, equipment, motorboat. or any other mechanical transport (including bicycles) [This also means that we cannot use chainsaws or gas-powered brush cutters in Wilderness. Thus, we must use the same crosscut saws to clear logs off the trail that were used in the late 1800s and early 1900s to remove all the huge trees out of the Appalachian Mountains.]
- ◆ Creation of a permanent or temporary road
- ◆ Inclusion of a commercial enterprise [such as liveries]
- ◆ Landing of aircraft
- ◆ Mining or logging

**During and prior to this era**, several important conservation-minded acts were passed by Congress:

- 1872 General Mining Act – authorizing mining on public lands and development of a “claims” system
- 1906 Antiquities Act – allowed designation of National Monuments
- 1916 National Park Service Organic Act – allowed establishment of National Parks
- 1911 The Weeks Act – allowed purchase of denuded or other “useless” lands from timber and other companies for development of national forests and national parks
- 1948 Clean Water Act
- 1963 Clean Air Act
- 1964 Wilderness Act – revisions in 1964, 1970, 1975. 1982
- 1968 Wild & Scenic Rivers Act
- 1970 NEPA, a system for evaluating the impact of any change to the land on the flora, fauna and archeological aspects of the area under consideration, creating an “Environmental Impact Statement” for the proposed project
- 1973 Endangered Species Act
- 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act – opened up areas east of the Mississippi for designation with less stringent criteria
- 1976 – BLM (Bureau of Land Management) added to the Wilderness Act
- 1980 Alaska Wilderness Act – added many lands in Alaska

**The original Wilderness Act designated 54 sites with 9.1 million acres *in toto*.**

In the years that followed, many additional sites were designated and today the National Wilderness Preservation System encompasses 806 areas with a total acreage of 111,889,002. This includes the 68,166 acres in SE TN, NW GA and SW NC.

- 1975 Gee Creek – 2,493 acres
- 1975 Cohutta – 36,977 acres
- 1975 Joyce Kilmer – Slickrock – 19,246 acres
- 1984 Bald River Gorge – 3,721 acres
- 1984 Citico Creek – 16,226 acres
- 1984 Big Frog – 8,480 acres
- 1986 Little Frog Mountain – 4,666 acres
- 2018 Upper Bald River – 9,038 acres

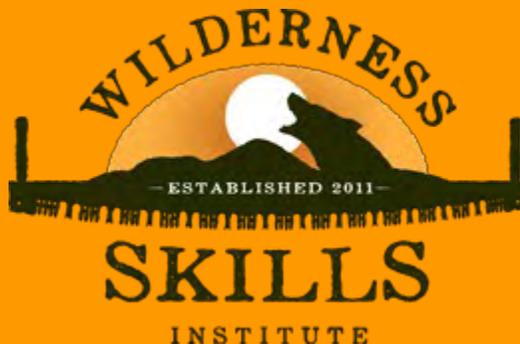
## Southern Appalachian Wilderness Skills Institute WSI 2026

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](#)



## Valentine's Day Maintenance in Georgia

by Joe Cantwell

A hearty group of 21 volunteers spent Valentine's Day giving some tender loving care to Sections 1 and 4. Excellent weather, as compared to last month's cancelled trips, helped make the day a tremendous success.

Barry Allen offered to lead Steve Hayden, Daphne Martin and Sam Sly to Owen Overlook on Section 1a. Their mission was to improve the view at the vista by pruning aerial growth with a pole saw. They also began preliminary steps to install a bench at this site. A future trip will add material that Barry has prepared and to add rebar to secure the bench from vandalism. A second crew consisting of Ken Cissna, Gilbert Treadwell and Tammy Register completed water diversion work on Section 1b. As a fitting tribute to Valentine's Day, Barry and his crew had the opportunity to meet a young couple who had just become engaged at the overlook minutes before the crew arrived.

A group of 13 volunteers met at Wilscot Gap for the morning safety briefing. Steve Pruett held a demonstration to sawyers of the proper use on materials found in the new Bleed Packs that are carried on the chaps of all BMTA chain sawyers. Three crews were dispersed along the trail. Marty Dominy, Section Maintainer for Section 4b was accompanied by Steve Dennison, Shelton Crow, Gideon Prisk and Byron Coker starting at Wilscot Gap and working southbound to Deadennen Mountain. They focused on water diversions and lopping. Joe Cantwell drove in on FS 430 to drop off the saw crews consisting of Elizabeth Weikert, Craig Gustavson, Shane Morrison and Art Kolberg. Three blowdowns and five dangerous hanging trees were removed. The third group parked at Friendship Baptist Church and entered the trail at Skennah Gap working northbound toward Payne Gap. Ian Guttridge, Byron White, Carol Nufer and Steve Pruett spent their day cleaning water diversions, lopping and clearing deadfall that had accumulated on the trail during the recent windstorms.

The tangible results of this maintenance effort included eight trees logged off the trail, 12,000 feet of lopping and brushing and 141 water diversions cleared for the spring rains. A total of 164 volunteer hours were donated to the BMTA and the hiking public.



**Hannah Weaver and Fischer Wood just after becoming engaged on Valentine's Day at Owen Vista.**



**Downed tree on Section 4a.**

# BMTA Outreach to Open Arms Home for Children

BMTAers Liz Henderson and David Watkins organized a lakeside hike for the girls at Open Arms Home for Children. Getting outside and experiencing the beauty, solitude and wonders of nature is not always available for everyone. The joy that can be shared from being on the trail can transcend many of our difficult situations.



Helping with the hike were David Watkins, Rebecca Campbell (Staff Open Arms), Beth Roberts, Nancy Watkins, Christie Decoufle (Board Member Open Arms), Liz Henderson, Ken Cissna and Kathy Williams.

Lunch was the reward for their hike, and each girl was given a goody bag that included a BMTA water bottle that had the BMTA map on it. These were a big hit! The girls were asked if they wanted to hike again and they were all for it!

*Sometimes it only takes one positive encounter to shift someone's direction. Showing a young girl that complete strangers care about her well-being, that people will show up for her, is something powerful. That kind of quiet encouragement can stay with someone for years. -Bob Cowdrick  
BMTA President*



# Exploring the Old Dutch Settlement

by Rick Harris and Clare Sullivan

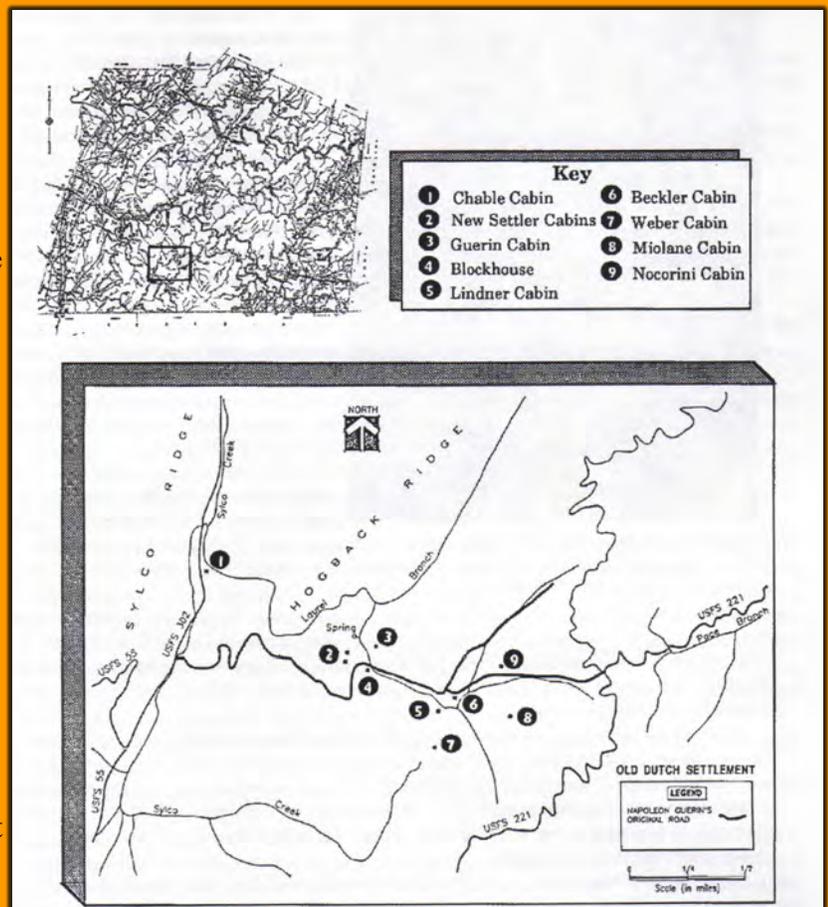
The history of the Old Dutch Settlement goes back nearly 200 years ago. Until 1838 and the Cherokee Removal Act, the lands on which the settlement were located were Cherokee Indian property. Soon thereafter, the lands became available for purchase. In 1842, a New Yorker named Christian Dietzsh visited the Big Creek area and built a house. He moved back to New York, deciding life in the Southern mountains was not to his liking, but he told a friend, Edward Bayer, a wealthy banker, about the lands close to his Big Creek homestead. Bayer purchased over 200,000 acres in what is now USFS lands in Polk County. In order to protect his holdings from squatters (the “Americans”, as he called them, mostly Scotch-Irish living in the Sylco Creek area), he decided to sponsor a utopian colony in the Dutch Creek area. He hired Napoleon Guerin as the colony manager. Guerin gathered together seven families who had immigrated from Germany, Italy and France to move to the Dutch Creek area and start the colony. The name of the creek and the Dutch Settlement was due to some of the families being from Germany (Deutschland).

Bayer’s wife (Adele) and her sister (Rosine Parmentier) helped recruit the immigrant families to move to SE Tennessee to start a new life. The colonization began in 1847. The immigrants took a long tortuous route to the new lands, traveling by train through Pittsburg, Cincinnati, and Cleveland TN, then a 3-day wagon route, much of which Guerin had built, from Cleveland to the new lands. The new families lived in two guest houses until they could build their own homes, which were spread around the Dutch Creek Valley. In the ensuing years, more families moved to the Dutch Settlement.

Guerin also constructed a guard house on his road into the colony to keep out the “Americans”. The new residents built their homes and started farming. They grew various types of grapes, selling them in Cleveland and for their own consumption. However, it was so far to markets in Cleveland that most of the wine was consumed within the colony itself. The area also became known as “Vineland” because of all the vineyards and wine making.

The colony began to decline as a distinct separate settlement in the late 1850s. The cause of the decline was the search for suitors among the “Americans” and the inevitable “melting pot” phenomenon that followed the integration of these “Americans” into the colony.

In 1870, Rosine, who inherited most of the lands previously owned by Bayer, began to sell off the lands. Eventually, much of the land was bought by the Ocoee Timber Company and was logged off. Later, the lands were purchased by the forest service to become part of the new Cherokee National Forest. The last of the families, the Becklers, sold their property to the USFS in 1939.



After the hikers learned about the area, they were about to explore from Rick Harris they began to spread out to explore the area. Hikers inspected the ground searching for evidence of an old home site. They found two possibilities – one where a collapsed chimney once stood and another area with lots of flat rocks that could have served as the four pillars of a cabin.



Judy Norton relocated an old wagon wheel that she had found on a previous hike to the area.



Daphne Martin and Roger Gordon discovered pieces of very old Mason jars near the wheel. They were patented in 1858.

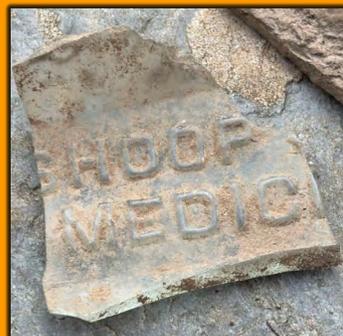
Daphne spotted a piece of pottery in the dirt where hogs had been digging. The rest of the hikers soon joined the quest for treasures – an old metal pipe buried in the dirt, a hinge, another piece of metal that had “medic” on it and a long, thick, bent nail. Pieces of glass with letters on them included one that spelled “shoop medici”, and another with “Mas”. There also was an old spring covered with a cap rock.

This was the first “bushwhacking” hike for Stephanie Gordon and Debbie Heilner, a new and unusual experience! Luckily, most of the hikers wore long pants and long-sleeve shirts as the briars were prolific. It was a perfect day to enjoy a trek through the woods while discovering relics of days gone by.

Hikers participating were Barb Childress, Roger and Stephanie Gordon, Rick Harris, Debbie Heilner, Chris Hurd, Daphne Martin, Judy Norton, Darrell and Melissa Sheffield, Kathy Williams and Clare Sullivan.



Barb Childress is proud of her discoveries on the hike!



# Getting it Done in Tennessee!

Photos courtesy of Clare Sullivan



Steve Baylis instructing Darrell Sheffield on the 45-degree technique.



Shelton Crow shows how it is done.



Hi ho! Hi ho! It's off to work we go!

Continued next page



Steve Baylis



Darrell Sheffield



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

***Join or Renew or Donate Today!***

# In Search of “Oh, WOW” with George Owen

by Kathy Williams

BMTAers George Owen, Tom Atcheson, Sharon Atcheson and Kathy Williams, ventured out after hearing that Lake Trahlyta at Vogel State Park had been drained. Dam repairs have necessitated the draining of the lake. The Park is open but the trail around the lake is closed until the repairs are completed. It is quite an extraordinary sight. Park staff said the hope is to be finished in April giving the lake time to refill before the warmer months arrive.





**Sharon and Tom Atcheson reunite with a view from years past. Blood Mountain is in the background.**

The visit to Lake Trahlyta took us on a short walk where, years ago, Tom and Sharon had stayed in the last cabin at the end of the lake.

When they had checked in, they were cautioned that there was a “Wildcat” and a “Haint” that they needed to be aware of.

They never did get to meet said “Haint” and the “Wildcat” turned out to be a very sweet and lovable kitty looking for a smile and a few kind words!

They enjoyed the memories and fun from that time.

Then George directed our tour to Neels Gap or Walasi-yi on Blood Mountain. Walasi-yi is Cherokee meaning place of the Great Frog. The only man-made structure the AT goes through is located here. Today Mountain Crossings occupies the building and is a major hub for those making the trek to Maine.



**George and the “OH, WOW” view from Walasi-yi.**



Woody Gap vistas, a feast for the eyes.



Tom and the traveling Leapfrog Café van of the Trail Angels.



We headed to Woody Gap next. Some Trail Angels had set up there. You can take a short hike to Panther Rock from this trailhead and there are restrooms.

From there we headed to Suches. All during the drive we encountered crews who were still doing needed cleanup from the two major winter storms. The ice storm in particular had caused the tops of trees to break and fall. Debris was everywhere.

In Suches we traveled along Black Mountain. On the way back we went into the Lake Winfield Scott Recreational Area. George pointed out several trailheads and how they connected to the many trails in the area.

It was an "OH, WOW!" day!

## BRRR BMTA at the Hike Inn BRRR

It was a cold and windy trek to the BMTA overnight at the Len Foote Hike Inn. Temperatures in the teens with a biting wind helped with the decision to hike straight through to the Inn forgoing a lunch midway. We knew there was a warm dining hall with warm beverages to help with the cold.



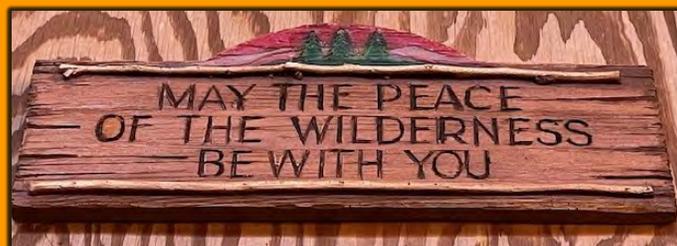
The Inn is Leed certified and is committed to conservation and waste reduction. Solar panels and minimal impact on the land was always part of the design. The Inn was built around the contours of the land.

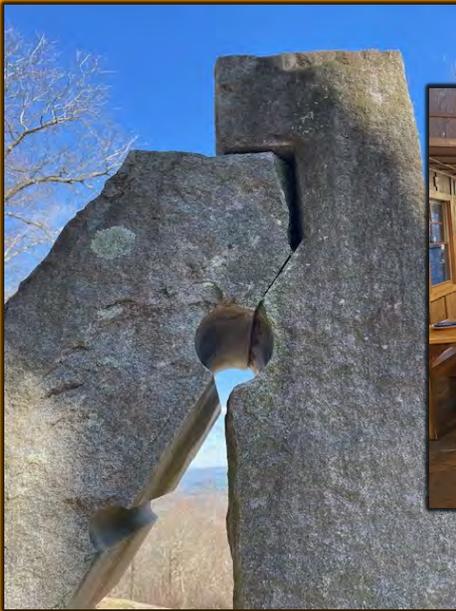


Allowing for as much natural light as possible is another energy saving decision. The backpacks displayed include one from the legendary Nimble Will Nomad (second to last on the right) who had his toenails removed after getting tired of them falling off from his impressive trail miles.



There is a daily tour of the Inn that includes watching the composting worms at work. Zero food waste is the goal each day. We had little problem devouring the delicious dinner and breakfast provided!





Stargazer



Dining hall



Sunrise room



Rick and Brenda Harris gave a presentation on their canoe trip to Boundary Waters.



The morning temperature was a balmy 15.

Continued next page



The Hike Inn sunrise was mesmerizing.

## Outdoors and Hiking in the Southern Appalachians Class

Instructor George Owen

For the fourth year George Owen is presenting his popular course at the Institute for Continued Learning (ICL) at Young Harris College. **Class is two hours on Wednesdays from 11AM until 1PM for seven weeks beginning April 1.** Beginners to experts in outdoor knowledge are welcome.

George has spent over a half-century creating and leading outdoor adventures in this area, ranging from Northern Georgia to the Smokies and beyond. Everything from Southern Appalachian animals to weather and information about hiking trails and more will be presented. Several hours will feature guest experts from our area on related outdoor subjects. One such presenter will be an expert at photographing mountain wildflowers. Bring your lunch if you wish to join George after class. Afterwards, several of George's friends will lead short, easy hikes in the area for those wanting a little post-lunch trek.

For more information and registration go [HERE](#).



### 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

### March



**March 14** (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. Section 3a-b-c – Hwy 60 >> Skeenah Gap.

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at [bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org](mailto:bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org).

**March 16** (Monday) Brush Creek Loop in Ducktown, TN. Moderate 4.5 miles along Ocoee Lake # 1. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at [rcollinson@bmta.org](mailto:rcollinson@bmta.org).

**March 20** (Friday) Exploratory Hike to Upper Lost Creek Falls, 4.5 miles. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. This series of waterfalls have been lost to the outside world for decades, ever since the USFS quit maintaining the trail from the Lost Creek Campground upstream to the falls. We know people who have bushwacked on the old trail. The falls are spectacular, but it is currently very difficult to get to them. We will meet at the Webb Bros store in Reliance at 9:00 AM, then carpool to the Lost Creek Campground. Then, with hand saws and loppers, we will work our way for two miles up the old trail to the waterfalls. As we go, we will leave flagging tape on the trees to mark the route. We are hoping the USFS will allow us to open this trail back up. Once we reach the falls, we will eat lunch, then return to our vehicles. This trail, we understand, crosses the creek several times, so you must be prepared for these water crossings. This is likely to be a difficult trip, so do not decide to go until you are sure you are up to the challenge. What to bring: Lunch, water, your dog on leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at [rharris@bmta.org](mailto:rharris@bmta.org)

**March 24** (Tuesday) Talking Rock. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna@bmta.org](mailto:kcissna@bmta.org).

**March 27** (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 the Owen Vista!

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna@bmta.org](mailto:kcissna@bmta.org).



**March 28** (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at [bmatatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org](mailto:bmatatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org)

### April

**April 3** (Friday) Flat Creek Loop. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5.6 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna@bmta.org](mailto:kcissna@bmta.org).

**April 3** (Friday) BMT along Hiwassee River from Childers Creek to the Powerhouse. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. For this ~5-mile hike, we will meet at the Childers Creek Trailhead at 10:00 AM, then position some vehicles up at the Appalachia Powerhouse. Then we will return to the Childers Creek Trailhead and hike upstream along this incredibly beautiful river along the John Muir Trail (JMT) to the Towee Creek parking area. From there, we will follow the old JMT route or the road to the powerhouse. What to bring: Lunch, water, your dog on leash. When we return to the parking lot at Childers Creek, we can fire up a stove and have hot chocolate and snacks, provided by Rick and Brenda. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at [rharris@bmta.org](mailto:rharris@bmta.org)

**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](mailto:kcissna@bmta.org).



**April 11** (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at [bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org](mailto:bmtagamaintdirector@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](mailto:rharris@bmta.org)



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

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at [bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:kcissna@bmta.org).



**May 9** (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at [bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org](mailto:bmtagamaintdirector@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](mailto:rcollinson@bmta.org).

**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](mailto:kcissna@bmta.org).



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

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at [bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org](mailto:bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org)

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



## Save the Dates

2026 Annual Meeting & Hike Fest  
November 5-8, 2026

Copperhill Brewery in Ducktown, TN

Watch for Details in the April Newsletter

The deadline for the April Newsletter is Wednesday, April 1.  
No kidding!  
Thank you!

[MEMBERSHIP](#)

[DONATE](#)

[DONATE LAF](#)

[PARTNERSHIPS](#)

[TRAIL STORE](#)