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# Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 38, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2021

## The MacKaye Biography: Unexpected Pleasures

by Tom Keene

On this the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Benton MacKaye’s treatise, ‘An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning,’ it seems fitting that we would look back on the life of the visionary forester, Benton MacKaye. That essay was the initial blueprint for the AT ... and his proposed southern spur route for the AT became the basis for our own Benton MacKaye Trail!

All his life Benton MacKaye loved maps. At fourteen he made a series of “expeditions” around his Massachusetts’ hometown, Shirley Center. For each expedition he made a detailed entry into his personal “Geographic Hand Book,” complete with hand-drawn maps that included his own contour lines. Later, his reports for the Forest Service were famous for the striking hand-drawn maps he invariably used to make his case. His enthusiasm for maps also was on display in his article proposing the Appalachian Trail. Many of his friends thought the striking overview map MacKaye drew for the 1921 article did more to capture people’s imagination than all the rest of the article together.

MacKaye’s preoccupation with maps is one of many insights that Larry Anderson brings to light in his biography, *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail*. Numerous maps are reproduced in the text. They are fascinating.

Larry Anderson is not an academic historian; he is a journalist who grew up in Massachusetts near Shirley Center, loved the outdoors and developed a life-long fascination with MacKaye. The book is meticulously researched and filled with fascinating details about MacKaye’s numerous grand ideas and his many famous friends. Gifford Pinchot, Lewis Mumford, Aldo Leopold and Walter Lippmann are just four of the famous names that appear frequently in the book. And of course, there is the famous non-friend, Morton Avery, whose differences with MacKaye over the building of the AT, are given fair and thoughtful treatment.

The book pulls no punches about MacKaye’s political radicalism. He was, for a time at least, a card-carrying socialist. This fact may seem shocking to Americans whose political attitudes were formed during the Cold War. But MacKaye was born in 1879. His formative years were a full generation before the Russian Revolution -- at a time when capitalism was in its most bruising and raw form when the Robber Barons were at full cry and when men and women who tried to organize labor unions were gunned down by thugs hired by their employers.

In an age when economic development seemed a brawling, ugly free-for-all, the “socialist” notion of planning, particularly at the local and regional levels, appealed to many. Indeed, socialism’s call for government planning of some aspects of economic life then seemed respectable, almost genteel -- especially when compared to anarchists and syndicalists of the time, who advocated a vast general strike that they hoped would bring capitalism to its knees and bring on world revolution.

Genteel socialists like MacKaye were an important element in the Progressive Movement that drove reform efforts in the U.S. -- from Teddy Roosevelt’s assumption of the presidency in 1901 through the early 1920’s. MacKaye got in on the ground floor. In 1903 he was the first graduate of Harvard’s new forestry program and one of the first employees of the U.S. Forest Service established by Roosevelt in 1905. Readers of this newsletter will mostly be aware of MacKaye’s advocacy of the Appalachian Trail and perhaps his contributions as a founder and early president of the Wilderness Society. But Anderson shows that Benton MacKaye played a behind-the-scenes role in many early conservation victories. One of these, the implementation of the Weeks Act of 1911, is of crucial importance to our trail.

By 1911 the fledgling Forest Service had shown it could successfully manage the existing National Forests in the west. Indeed Gifford Pinchot, the highly vocal first Chief Forester, gained such a reputation for aggressive empire building that he was forced from office. But virtually all National Forest land was in the west, where it had fallen, largely by inattention, into Federal hands -- the result of the Louisiana Purchase and other U. S. Government acquisitions. Creating National Forests in the east was politically tricky. Opponents claimed the government had no constitutional right to condemn and buy private land to create such forests.

Advocates of the eastern National Forests pointed to the Constitution’s commerce clause, which the Supreme Court had interpreted as giving the federal government the right to take actions necessary to maintain the nation’s navigable rivers. Advocates argued proper maintenance of the forests at the headwaters of the eastern rivers was essential to assure a moderate and manageable flow in navigable rivers. Opponents questioned this reasoning and forced an amendment to the Weeks Act requiring that the U. S. Geological Survey (not the “empire-building” Forest Service!) should undertake a scientific study to determine whether in fact the management of the headwaters’ forests would have a significant impact on navigable waters.

The U. S. Geological Survey set up the needed scientific study but needed an experienced forester to take the necessary measurements in the New Hampshire’s White Mountains -- which were to be the test case. The man loaned to USGS by the Forest Service was none other than our own Benton MacKaye. MacKaye spent the summer of 1912 in the White Mountains collecting data. Thanks to his hiking trips as a young man, he knew the area well and he was very eager for a National Forest to be created in the area. On his return to Washington, he produced a powerful report filled with charts, tables, and, of course, maps. His report became a major part of the Geological Survey paper that enabled the Weeks Act to withstand numerous court challenges. That success was vital to the creation of the National Forests in the east, including much of the land through which the Appalachian Trail and our own trail pass.

The efforts surrounding the Weeks Act are only one of many dramas in which Benton MacKaye was involved during his long career. If you want the whole story, you will want to read the book, available on Amazon - [\*Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail \(Creating the North American Landscape\)\*](#) by Larry Anderson.

One final word: In 1930 MacKaye gave an address to the Appalachian Trail Conference as it was battling to create that famous trail. One of his lines strikes me as good advice for us as we continue to strive to make the Benton MacKaye Trail the preeminent mid-distance trail in the United States. MacKaye’s suggestion: “Speak softly and carry a big map.”

This article first appeared in the President’s Column of BMTA’s March 2008 Newsletter -- Some revisions were made to reflect Benton MacKaye’s influence today.

*Celebrate BMTA's 40th Anniversary!*

**2021 BMTA Annual Meeting & Hike Fest Nov. 11 – 14**

Unicoi State Park & Lodge, Helen, Georgia



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**Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!**

## Wait-There's a Quiz?!!!!

by Richard Harris

This hike was originally scheduled for May 3, but due to heavy day-long rains, was rescheduled for May 7. Seven hikers met at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center and drove to the Bald River Falls Parking Lot. We first viewed the main falls by the road, then hiked up the perfectly maintained trail. The first mile is rocky with lots of ups and downs. But we forgot about the challenges as numerous “eye candy waterfalls” appeared. The next four miles were easier hiking, much of it on the old rail bed. Crossing Pawpaw Creek was tricky.



Rick spent time discussing the logging days, the route of the narrow-gauge railway used by Shey engines to bring out the logs, the old Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) rec area above the falls, the CCC itself and the location of CCC camps in the area.

In addition to the history lesson, Rick explained what a Wilderness designation means for explorers and trail maintainers. This was followed up with a quiz on the eight Wilderness areas in the region. No one knew them all.

Next Carolyn Sewell introduced the hikers to the numerous flowering plants that we encountered along the way. We saw some of the largest blooming Solomon Seals ever, both true and false.



Continued next page



We ate lunch at the last falls closest to Bald River Road, then returned to the parking lot. It was a gorgeous, cool, sunny, breezy day -- much different from the Monday it was scheduled for.

In addition to Carolyn slowing us down to look at flowers, Rick sprinkled the hike with his history talks and documented the location of the 11 campsites along the trail as well as GPSing the route for the upcoming revision of the Will Skelton's *Cherokee National Forest Hiking Guide*. But slow is good, to the enjoyment of all.

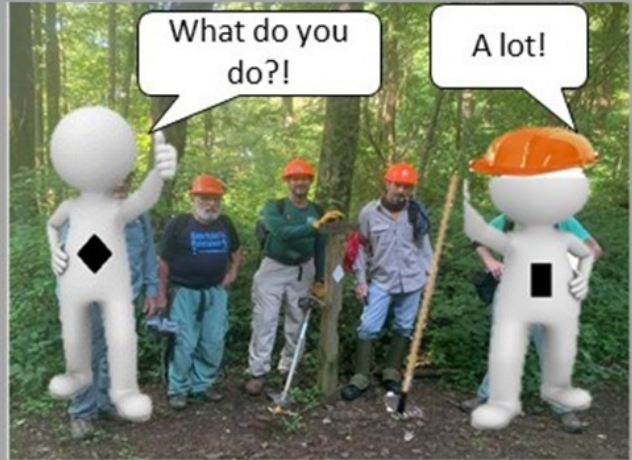


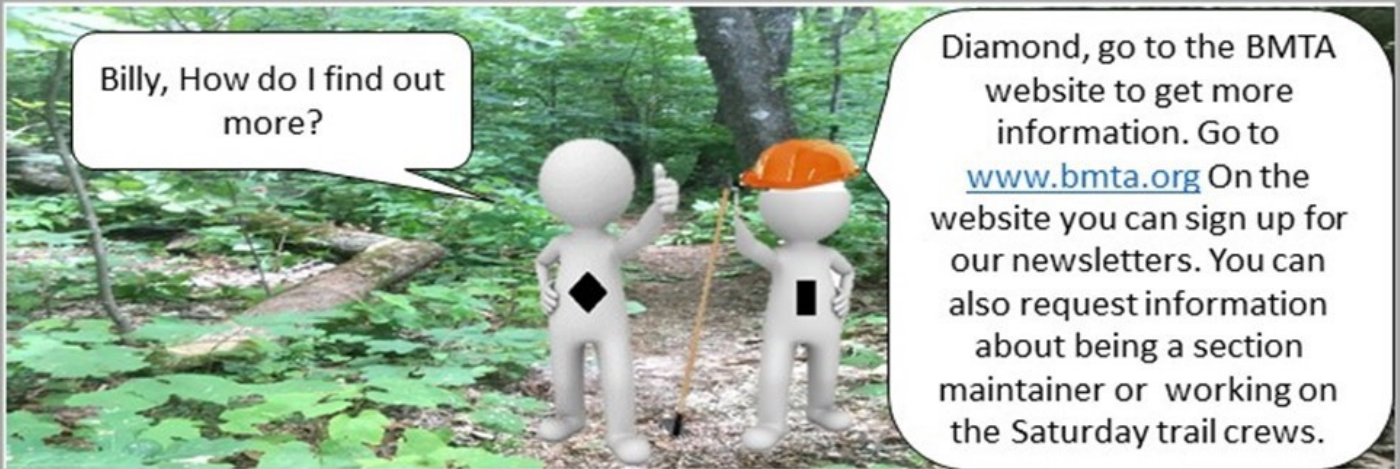
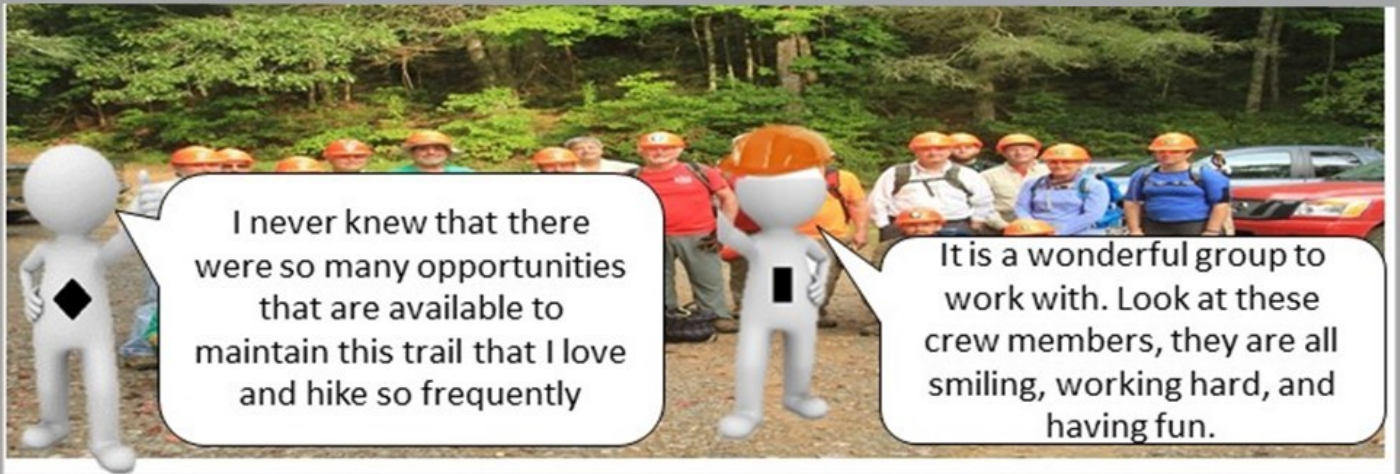
Wait—There's a quiz?!!!

# Diamond Dan

A Bob Cowdrick Creation

It was a beautiful day in March. The sun was out, the birds were singing and the flowers were beginning to bloom. Diamond Dan was hiking a remote stretch of the Benton MacKaye Trail. He climbed up over the summit of Big Mountain and he was heading down into Deep Gap when he came upon an amazing group of people.





With a renewed spring in his step and joy in his heart, Diamond Dan continues down the trail, determined to join this merry group of BMTA trail maintainers!



Work Trip Volunteer  
Section Maintainer  
Shuttle Driver

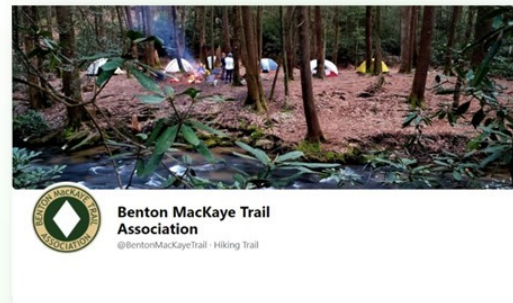


Hike Leader  
Hike Participant

**Please Complete the Volunteer Form  
Let Us Know How You Want to Help BMTA**



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Festival Staff  
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**We Need Your Expertise!**

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Legal Expertise

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Newsletter

Marketing/Outreach

Photography/Videography



## TN BMTA Work Trip Section 17a-b Sycamore Creek

by Richard Harris

Fifteen maintainers participated in our May TN BMTA work trip to log and brush out Sections 17a-b, the section of the BMT along Sycamore Creek between the Tellico River and Whigg Meadow. This 6.2-mile section was completely logged out, removing 20 trees, including one huge 36-inch tree suspended above the trail. The saw team consisted of Bob Cowdrick and Ed and Clare Sullivan. Three other teams covered two-mile segments brushing out the trail and the four campsites. We also replaced the sign at the lower switchback. Pam and Kent Mathews plan to go back later to replace the upper switchback sign. It was a long, but very productive day. Afterwards several folks visited local restaurants. We had hoped to go to the Iron Works Grille, but it was packed to the gills with no parking spot left and a long waiting line.

Participants included Pam and Kent Mathews (section maintainers), Rick and Brenda Harris, Ken and Phyllis Jones, Ed and Clare Sullivan, Bob Cowdrick, Keith Mertz, Judy Wade, Ralph Van Pelt, Bill Lawder, Andy Meeks and Anne Anderson.



Continued next page



***Join Now!***

Use this link to become a BMTA member:

***Membership***

# Thru and Thru

by Mike Pilvinsky

While on a trail maintenance mission in the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness, BTMA President Ken Cissna and past President Dick Evans, came across a recent blowdown. They immediately pulled out their saws and went to work. Soon, two thru hikers from Cleveland, Ohio, came by, dropped their packs, and helped clear the trail. Many thanks to Bret (no trail name) Checkensky and Kyle “OK” Miller. Afterward, Ken and Dick cooled off with cold drinks at the Topoco Lodge when another thru hiker came into the restaurant. They quickly invited Case Dockins to join us. Case was thru hiking with his dad, Marty “Bamadog” Dockins, who was about a half-day behind his son. They planned to meet at Fontana Lodge the next day. Each of the thru hikers expressed appreciation to everyone who helps keep the trails in great shape.



Whew.....So when do we eat? Oh, wait we're not done yet.



Ah.....Nourishment!!!

# Along the Way.....

Photos from Cindy Leffelman





Trail Skills Workshop  
Lake Winfield Scott, Suches GA  
September 25 & 26, 2021

The Trail Skills Workshop (TSW) is a training event focused on teaching the most current trail construction and maintenance methods applicable for Eastern landscapes. These classes are for new and experienced trail workers. Skilled instructors are provided from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the United States Forest Service (FS) and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). The \$30.00 fee includes: all courses, a T-shirt, 2 nights camping and Saturday BBQ.

**105: Essential Trail Maintenance:**

This course focuses on improved modern methods of maintaining the Appalachian Trail. Main subjects include: safety, corridor clearing, drainage structures and tread realignment.

**215: Drainage Design and Drain Dips:**

An intermediate to advanced course that gives in-depth field instruction explaining the use, application and modern design of drainage structures and other devices.

**325: Moving Big Stuff:**

Explore mechanical advantage techniques working with a Come along and Maasdam to move large rocks and bucked trees.

**335: Rock Construction:**

Led by the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew, this advanced course focuses on sound design of rock staircases, guide features and retrofitting aging structures.

Sign up now at <https://forms.gle/5GBSMz5fdKuYnVy1A> to be advised when registration opens in early July. Please direct questions to Jay Dement, [jay@jayDphotos.com](mailto:jay@jayDphotos.com).

**THRU HIKERS ADVISORY**

**Do NOT mail food drops for your hike on the BMT to the Smokemont Campground!  
Smokemont does have a food lock box for thru hikers.  
Food drops can be left by you *personally*.  
You cannot mail them.  
Thanks!!!**

## Hangover Hike from Wolf Laurel Trailhead

by Richard Harris

Thirteen folks were signed up to hike but due to gas shortages, only eight could make it. Five met at the Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center at 9AM and three met us at the Wolf Laurel Trailhead on the east flank of Stratton Ridge. The day started and stayed cool in the 50's with partly sunny skies. We headed up the Stratton Ridge Trail reaching the BMT on Stratton Ridge at 1.3 miles. After resting at "Sit your butt down for a few minutes Rock" at an elevation of 5,281', we left for Naked Ground. Next it was upward to Haeo (once the site of a fire tower) arriving at the Hangover at mile 3.5.



We ate lunch and admired the incredible views into the Smokies and the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests and across the Tennessee River Valley to the Cumberland Plateau.

Continued next page



Always a challenging hike, the trail was in good condition except for three or so minor blowdowns. We then returned the way we came, all very tired after this difficult but rewarding hike.

Hike Leaders were Richard and Brenda Harris, who were joined by Tom and Carolyn Sewell, Mary Alton, Anne Anderson, Phil Strickler and Fred Woodward. The total distance for this hike was 7 miles with an elevation gain of 2,041'.

## Lady Slipper Turned Waterfall Hike

by Joy Forehand

The April 28 hike was supposed to be a hike to see the huge gardens of pink lady slippers at Mulky Gap. Unfortunately, the USFS did a controlled burn about a week before the hike ... nothing was left. According to the Georgia Botanical Society, because many of the pink beauties were already up and blooming, they will not be back. This was a rare species of the lady slipper -- an extremely large plant with a high fruit set.



The hike's destination was changed to Turtletown Creek Falls. With cascades of glistening white water rushing over the rocks, the falls did not disappoint.

And, the area was not without wildflowers ... including four pink lady slippers!

Hikers for the day were Hike Leaders Joy and Frank Forehand and Penny Strickland.

# Lady Slippers Fashion Show

by Joy Forehand

There was a special treat in store for the hikers on the May 5 Lady Slipper Hike on the Weaver Creek section of the BMT -- a rare white lady slipper!

The gardens coming down Scroggin Knob contained more lady slippers than ever. The largest garden was by the water cutoff to the spring where the ladies lined the forest pathway. This group of lady slippers was far larger and more abundant than in previous years.

The group included Hike Leaders Joy and Frank Forehand, Kathy Williams, Paul Black, Joe Cantwell, Patti O'Dell, Penny Strickland and Gary Harmon.



## “Alarming” Amadahy Hike

by Ken Cissna with photos courtesy of Tom and Carolyn Sewell

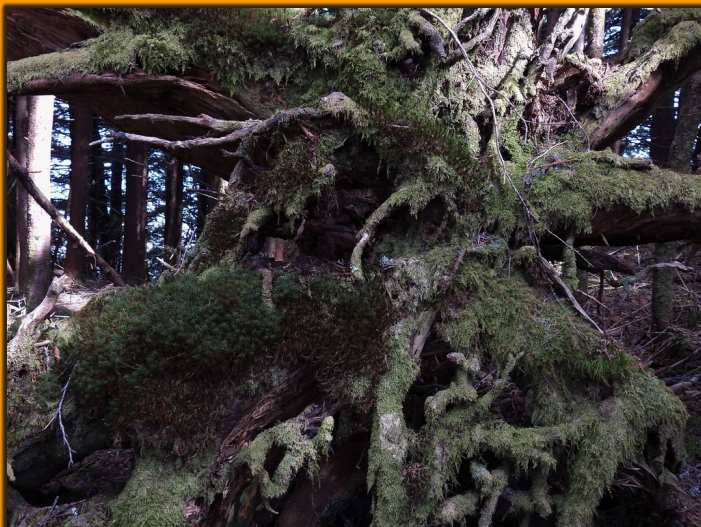
We could have called this the Brood-X Cicada Hike, something the BMTA has never held before this year. I know that because our hiking program doesn't go back 17 years. The president of my homeowner's association told me yesterday that one of our neighbors called him to complain about another neighbor's house alarm going off. Well, of course, it wasn't the neighbor's alarm system but the cicadas that were making the noise. And we certainly could have thought an alarm was going on during this hike—at least during the first and last portions of it. The sound nearly disappeared during the walk to and back from the marine campground where we went to have our snack. They must not like peninsulas.

The hike was excellent—beautiful weather and Susan Paul, Carolyn Sewell and Tom Sewell as well as Susan's dog Bryson and my Artie made terrific company.



## Do you wonder when you wander?

Photos courtesy of Cindy Leffelman





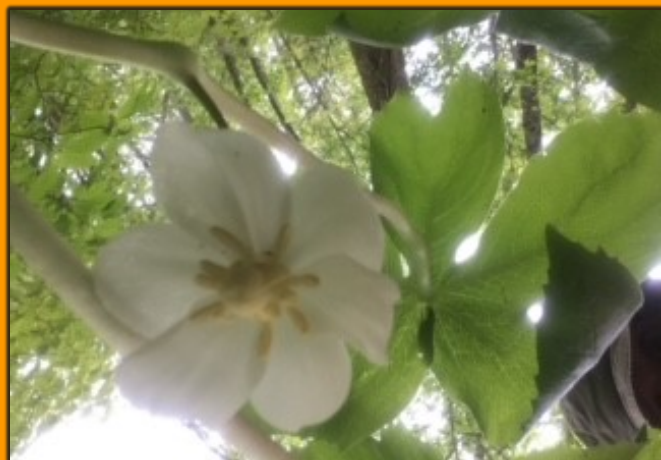
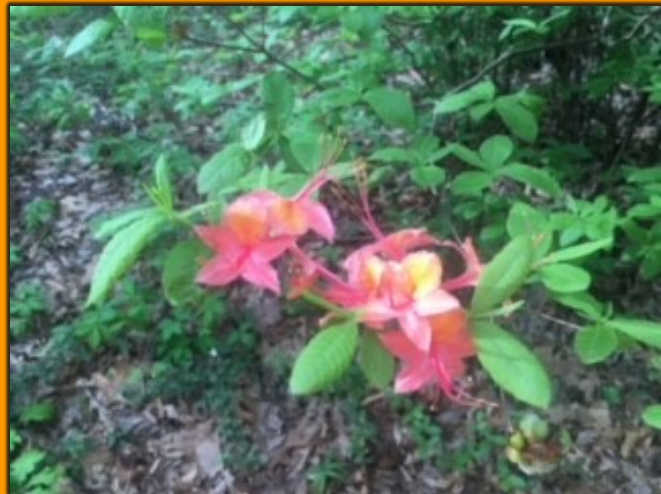
# Four Seasons Hike

by Ken Cissna



Six hikers—Howard Baggett, Darcy Douglas, Mike Pilvinsky, Penny Strickland and of course, Artie and Ken Cissna—went on the spring version of the BMT dog friendly Four Seasons Hike Series. The weather was excellent and the wildflowers did not disappoint. We saw far more than pictured—far more than we could name.

We drove as far as one can on FS 793, then walked the road to its end at McKenny Gap. That's where we got on the Benton MacKaye Trail northbound which is where we found the abundance of wildflowers. When we ran out of time, we turned around and walked back to our cars.



# BMTA Corporate Members

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



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# Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Tom Sewell, Hiking Director

## Guidelines for Our Hikes

- ◆ Only hikes that do not require shuttles are allowed under the auspices of BMTA.
- ◆ All hikers must drive to the meeting place and trailhead in their own cars -- no carpooling except among family members.
- ◆ Any potential hiker who is feeling ill, has traveled within the past 14 days to a location with a significant number of cases of the novel corona virus (COVID-19), or has been exposed within the past 14 days to a person who has been confirmed as or is even suspected of having COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
- ◆ All hikes are limited to a maximum of 10 participants—hike leaders may impose even lower limits.

Before, during, and after a hike, participants must maintain an appropriate distance from one another (an absolute minimum of six feet—but 10 or 15 or 20 is much better).

## June

**June 7 (Monday)** Quartz Loop at the Whitewater Center in Ducktown, TN. Moderate 4.7 miles. Hike Leader Evelin Yarns. For more information contact [hikeleaderEY@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderEY@bmtamail.org).

**June 9 (Wednesday)** Bolling Park Trails Canton, GA. Easy 5-6 miles in this great preserve. Hike Leader Howard Baggett. For more information contact [hikeleaderHB@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderHB@bmtamail.org).



**June 12 (Saturday) GA Work Trip** Fall Branch > Weaver Creek Sections 6b,c and d. Logout, brushout and tread repair. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick [GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org).

**June 13 (Sunday)** Easy to moderate 4 miles at the Ocoee Whitewater Center to see the water release arrive from two miles upriver. See rafters and kayakers on the raging rapids. Learn about the 1996 Olympic competition for kayaks and canoes. Hike one of the trails past the tasty wild raspberries and through the lovely Rhododendrons back to the Thunder Rock parking lot. Hike Leader Clare Sullivan. For more information contact [hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org).

**June 21 (Monday)** 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. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).

**June 23 (Wednesday)** Gorges State Park near Sapphire, NC to Rainbow Falls and Whitewater Falls. Both falls are spectacular. One is a 411' fall. Moderate 5-mile hike with good possibility of seeing one of the closest rainbows ever. Two hour drive each way from Blairsville, GA. Leader will provide a link to Google Maps directions from Blairsville, GA to Gorges State Park. Date subject to change if cloudy skies forecast in the vicinity of the falls. Leader has hiked it twice and each time viewed a huge rainbow around noon to 12:30 PM on sunny days with a large waterfall in the background during return portion of the hike. Good canopy on this trail and fairly high elevation so heat shouldn't be a major issue. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).



**June 26 (Saturday) TN Work Trip** Heart of Darkness. Section 16a Sandy Gap to Round Top. Annual logout and refresh blazes. For more information contact Rick Harris, [tn-ncmaintdirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:tn-ncmaintdirector@bmtamail.org).

**June 27 (Sunday) AT/BMT double-loop hike** west from Three Forks. This moderate 6-mile hike covers the lower north flank and top of Rich Mountain. Hike Leader George Owen. For more information contact [hikeleaderGO@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderGO@bmtamail.org).

## July

**July 7 (Wednesday) Wildcat Creek Trail** near Ellijay, GA. Approximately 7.5 miles with stream crossing to Fall Branch Falls Trail to Ammons Falls and return. Some brief strenuous segments. Hiking poles recommended. Trail located in GA Wildlife Management Area and requires a free GA Lifetime Sportsman license for Georgia residents over 65 or obtaining a permit thru GA Department of Natural Resources. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).



**July 10 (Saturday) GA Work Trip** Weaver Creek > Boardtown Road. Sections 7b,c,d. Logout, brushout and tread repair. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick [GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org).

**July 12 (Monday) 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. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).

**July 14 (Wednesday) Laurel-Snow Trail to Laurel Falls.** Moderate 6.1-mile trail out and back in Laurel-Snow State Natural Area near Dayton, TN. Two-hour drive each way from Blue Ridge. Leader will provide link to Google Maps directions from Blairsville, GA to trailhead. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact [hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org).

**July 17 (Saturday) Big Frog, Rough Creek, Benton MacKaye Trail loop** of FS 221 in TN. This moderately strenuous hike has one significant climb in the morning with three creek crossings after lunch - over 6-mi. with brief gravel road walk to complete the loop. Hike Leader George Owen. For more information contact [hikeleaderGO@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderGO@bmtamail.org).



**July 24 (Saturday) TN Work Trip** Section 16b Heart of Darkness. Annual logout and refresh blazes. Crew Leaders Keith Mertz and Ellie Doughty. For more information contact Keith Mertz, [keithmertz@hotmail.com](mailto:keithmertz@hotmail.com)

**July 26 (Monday) Four Season Hike Series – Summer:** BMT - Hudson Gap, out and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4-5 miles. We're going to offer this relatively short and fairly easy hike during each season this year. Best I can offer this season may be heat and humidity, but a good hike for all is guaranteed. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).

## August



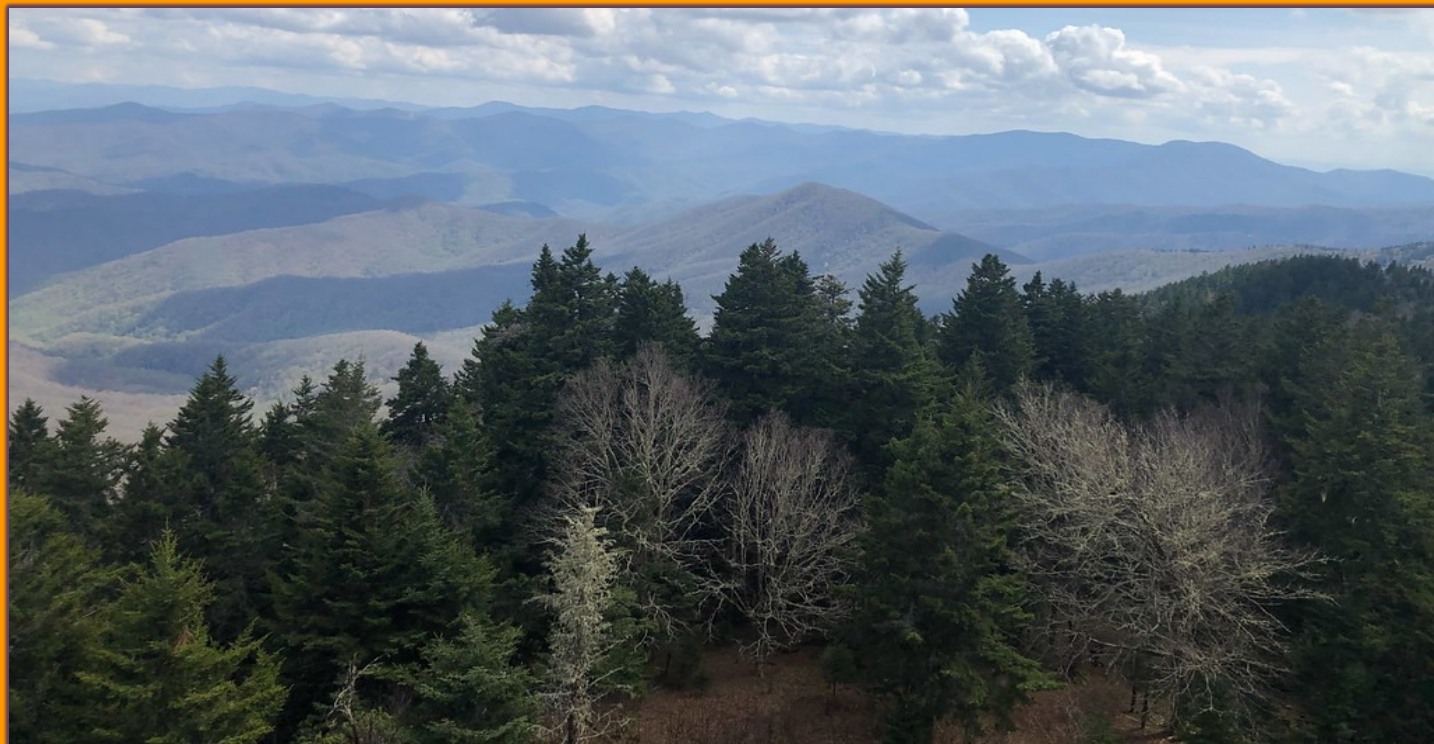
**August 14 (Saturday) GA Work Trip** Sections 8 a, b, c, d. Logout, brushout and tread repair. For more information contact Bob Cowdrick [GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org](mailto:GAMaintDirector@bmtamail.org).

**August 16 (Monday) 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) and a section of potentially slippery rock toward the beginning and again at the end 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. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).

**August 27 (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. Two “rock hopping” stream crossings could get your feet wet depending on stream levels and recent rainfall. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact [hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org](mailto:hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org).



**August 28 (Saturday) TN Work Trip** Section 13e. Annual logout and refresh blazes. For more information contact Steve Bayliss, [stevebayliss801@gmail.com](mailto:stevebayliss801@gmail.com).



The view from Mt. Sterling Tower, courtesy of Cindy Leffelman.

**The deadline for the July Newsletter is Wednesday, June 30.  
Thank you!**