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President's Column

Trail Lit for the Benton MacKaye

Now is the Time

Ian Marshall's *Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail* is among my favorite trail-related books. Marshall begins his book in Georgia (as of course he must!). He starts with the Cherokee Myths in North Georgia, takes it north, and ends with Thoreau on Mount Katahdin. Between Springer and Katahdin we hear from William Bartram, Annie Dillard, Thomas Jefferson, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Robert Frost and others. It's true the book gets a little academic; it began as Marshall's PhD dissertation, and sometimes it shows. But, my oh my, does Marshall have an ear for an arresting quotation. The book is filled with them.

Take our third President's famous description of the view from Jefferson Rock above Harper's Ferry. Most readers (and especially those who have visited Harpers Ferry) will recall Jefferson's iconic quote "This scene is worth a voyage across the Atlantic to see."

But that's just the culmination of Jefferson's description. Here is (some of) the build-up:

You stand on a very high point of land. On your right comes the Shenandoah, having ranged along the foot of the mountains a hundred miles to seek a vent. On your left approaches the Patowmac [sic], in quest of passage also. In the moment of their juncture they rush together against the mountain, render it asunder, and pass off to the sea. The first glance of this scene hurries our senses into the opinion, that the earth has been created in time, that the mountains were formed first, that the rivers began to flow afterwards, that in this place, particularly, they have been damned up by the Blue Ridge of mountains, and have formed an ocean which filled the whole valley; that continuing to rise they have at length broken over this spot, and have torn the mountain down from its summit to its base....



Continued next page

And what, you may ask, has this got to do with the BMTA?

The motto of our association is wonderfully apt: “Leaving a trail for generations to follow.” That is indeed our goal, and it is a most honorable quest. But there is more to a great trail, one that lasts, that resonates down through the generations, than the physical trail itself. There is also the tradition, the lure of the trail, including the stories of – and from – the places it passes through. To my mind we need to begin now to collect those tales and traditions and make them more fully part of the culture of the Benton MacKaye Trail.



Hiwassee Union Baptist Church
Photo by Tom Keene

There is no shortage of material. Take this old building which our trail passes in Reliance, Tennessee. That’s the Hiwassee Union Baptist Church, beautifully situated on the banks of the Hiwassee River.

Built about 1899, the top floor of the building served as the local Masonic Lodge, while the first floor was a church and community meeting place.

Before the nearby bridge was built across the Hiwassee, folks from the north side of the river had to ride a flatbed ferryboat to church as seen below. (I am sure we are all delighted the lady in the white dress did not have to wade across the Hiwassee to go to church!)

I’m not sure the scene is “worth a voyage across the Atlantic to see” but it’s certainly worth a drive up from Atlanta --especially given the great hike on the BMT-John Muir Trail along the Hiwassee River that goes with it.



Flatbed Ferryboat
Photo courtesy southeasttennessee.com

There are many other tales we need to tell and make part of our trail's common culture. Here is a sampler off the top of my head:

- ◆ How did Springer Mountain become the starting point for the Appalachian Trail -- and the BMT?
- ◆ What's the back-story on the Dyer family that gave us the touching worship place and cemetery at their namesake gap?
- ◆ Why were the Hemp Top and Flat Top fire towers taken down while the one on Brawley still stands?
- ◆ A little info on the amazing TVA project along the Ocoee River, please...
- ◆ Who won gold at the Ocoee Whitewater Center in 1996?
- ◆ What was John Muir doing walking along the Hiwassee River, so far from Yosemite?
- ◆ Was the below-ground space of the Tapoco Lodge really built to serve as a bomb-shelter in case the Nazis tried to blow up the nearby dam?
- ◆ How did the plant community on Mount Sterling come to so closely resemble that in the White Mountains in New Hampshire?

And so on. Knowing such backstories will enrich hikers experience on the trail and give folks tales to tell – to one another and to their kids.

In this internet age we don't need to publish a book to make these tales accessible. We can put them on our website. The current campaign to rebuild and upgrade our website gives us a huge opportunity. We have lots of options for using such material on our site. We could pull all the information together on a searchable trail history page. Or we could break the lore into bite-size bits to enhance section-by-section trail descriptions for prospective hikers. Or do both!

Interested in getting involved in such a project? Or, do you have a tale or two of people or places along the BMT that we should add to our list? Send me a note - tkbmta@gmail.com.

Teaser-Any idea of where I am in this photo? Stay tuned!



MARCI SPENCER TO SPEAK AT BMTA ANNUAL MEETING

by George Owen



Marci Spencer

We are indeed fortunate to have just secured noted historian and outdoor author Marci Spencer to be our November 3 BMTA Annual Meeting featured speaker.

Marci has written several books including histories on two national forests, and is a popular speaker here in the southeastern Appalachians. Her two recent books are *Pisgah National Forest: A History* (2014) and *Nantahala National Forest: A History* (2017). Also, she authored *Clingman's Dome, Highest Mountain in the Great Smokies* (2013) and a children's book based on true events, *Potluck, Message Delivered: "The Great Smoky Mountains are Saved!"* (2015).

In addition to writing these four books over the last five years, she has been much involved in outdoor education speaking. The Yosemite Conservancy included Mrs. Spencer's essay "Pine Siskins Make History" in its book *The Wonder of It All: 100 Stories from the National Park Service*, published to celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service.

A Master of Science degree from East Tennessee State University prepared Marci for a career as a nurse practitioner in the fields of cardiology, emergency services, family medicine and overseas medical missionary work. Weekends found her piloting a private aircraft or climbing a mountain somewhere.

Since retirement from her nursing career Marci has also volunteered in public resources at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, stationed at Clingmans Dome. She is a volunteer educator for the Appalachian Bear Rescue.

Mrs. Spencer earned naturalist certifications from the North Carolina Arboretum, Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont and the North Carolina Environmentalists Education Program. She has taught classes at the NC Arboretum, as well as courses at the Hendersonville, NC community college and Montreat (NC) College Lifelong Learning Center.

Children's outdoor programs are a special interest to her also, teaching in classrooms, libraries, summer camps and community events. These children's courses bear such names as "Become a Junior Bear Biologist" and "Become a Junior Ornithologist." Another nature-related activity is a rather unique hobby for her: raising ceremonial white doves for release at weddings, funerals, and other special events.

Marci and her husband Dr. John Spencer will be our guests overnight on November 3. John is a retired orthopaedic surgeon. He is featured in some of the pictures in Marci's books, and frequently travels with her.

More Overnight Options Now Available in Coker Creek Area for BMTA Annual Meeting

By George Owen

Since the so-called "Leadership Cabins" at Coker Creek Village (henceforth CCV) rapidly filled for our **BMTA 2018 Annual Meeting the weekend of November 2-4**, and some people did not wish to stay in the bunk houses, we had something of a problem. So on May 1, Darcy Douglas and George Owen journeyed again to the Coker Creek, Tennessee area to find additional housing. The day-long trip resulted in the following great assortment of facilities that we can now list for you.

- A member of our association, Becky Buchberger, is offering two of her extra bedrooms, each with a bath, and an apartment over her garage. She is just a couple miles from CCV. Contact Darcy or George if interested to secure Becky's phone or email.
- Across from CCV and up a hill is the very modern and beautiful three-story CocoBelle Lodge featuring five private bedrooms and access to kitchen privileges along with very nice bathrooms on each floor. This is rented only with the entire facility being taken by multiple persons, up to about 18 together at a time, for \$300 per night and a one-time cleaning fee of \$175. This also includes use of washer and dryer. VRBO listing 367750. Private email/phone available from Darcy or George.
- Ten miles north of CCV is the town of Tellico Plains with many new small cabins available through Mountain View Cabin Rentals - www.tellicologcabins.com - 423-519-2000, office at 1006 Cherohala Skyway, Hwy. 165, on right about a mile east of Hardee's, large black bear cutout by mailbox. Darcy and George visited these and liked them a lot - very clean. \$39 plus tax and up nightly.
- Right across the road from CCV, up Peachtree Lane, is a rental cabin with two bedrooms and a bath. Contact Rosemary and Larry Pound, 423-261-7170.
- Two or three more cabins on the CCV property, next to the creek, will be converted to regular bed cabins after summer camps conclude. CCV owners assure us furniture is already ordered for these. Contact Marylu at CCV, 423-519-2000.
- We were much impressed in an Airbnb offered to us in Ducktown, Tennessee, just off U.S. 64, one mile west of Hardee's. It is the large and very beautiful home of Jeff and Lori Patterson - several rooms in the house are available, with access to a kitchen. There is also a cottage out back with bathroom, bedroom and some campsites area. The only problem is that this location is significantly further away from CCV than any other options - reach via Airbnb - email is [faithandhopetogether AT gmail.com](mailto:faithandhopetogether@gmail.com) or phone Darcy or George.

Finally, let's be a little clearer about the bunkhouse option at CCV. Remember, these have both AC and heat and are each only a few yards from the restroom building. In addition, the owner has granted that we can group up in these anyway we wish, sexes together where wished, etc. Beds can be moved together to effectively create a double bed where desired. So these too continue as an effective and very inexpensive option.

If you have further questions, please contact Darcy Douglas at bmtadarcy@yahoo.com or George Owen at (706) 374-4716.

COMING SOON IN YOUR NEWSLETTER: NOVEMBER ANNUAL MEETING HIKES AND LEADERS LIST!

Tennessee Work Report

By Barry Allen

As many of our members know, the fourth Saturday of every month is reserved for work on the Tennessee/ North Carolina portions of trail. Unfortunately, we are currently without a Maintenance Director for these portions of our trail. But the trail certainly doesn't maintain itself! Beginning in May, we are trying a little different approach for our monthly work trips: a rotating schedule of section maintainers and other trained maintenance leaders will volunteer to handle the maintenance trips for the month.

I volunteered to take March and April trips in Tennessee and after a little reconnaissance work with Phil and Debra Guhl, we decided that Section 12 from Kimsey Highway to Lost Creek Campground was a prime candidate. For two consecutive months, Georgia and Tennessee volunteers worked this section of trail. On the fourth weekend in March -- a cool, wet weekend -- we gathered at Lost Creek Campground on a Friday afternoon. After a drizzly evening, we headed out on Saturday morning to log and brush the trail from McFarland Road to Lost Creek. At the end of the day on Saturday, after cutting through almost four miles of trail, our group stumbled into the campground and barely moved the rest of the evening. Our small group of Mike Kovitch, Bob Ruby, Ben Yaun, and Barry Allen (with Ed Sullivan serving as shuttle driver) had removed 60 odd trees of all sizes from the trail. And we had brushed out several rough areas along the way. I can honestly say that in all my years of working trail, I have only rarely been this physically exhausted at the end of a work day. But the steak dinner served that night by Ben Yaun made it all worthwhile!!!



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Keith using his father-in-law's antique draw tool.

Exactly one month later, we loaded up the car and decided to do it all over again, but this time, we had a few more volunteers!

Joining our group from Tennessee were Kim and Jason Murrell, Keith Mertz, Larry Van Dyke, Jeremy Jones, and Clare and Ed Sullivan. From Georgia, we had Ken Cissna, Phil Guhl, Darcy Douglas, Mike Kovitch, David and Janice Lankford and myself. Our group left vehicles at McFarland Road, then drove to the trail crossing on Kimsey Highway where we reviewed our plan for the day before heading into the woods. Larry Van Dyke, Jeremy Jones, Ed Sullivan, Mike Kovitch, Phil Guhl and myself ambled out on the trail to log and brush the next couple of miles of path. The remainder of the group worked to refresh blazes along the way. One group painted their way all the way to Lost Creek, hiking six miles of trail (Thanks Keith, Clare, David and Janice!). The rest of us mere mortals covered about 2.4 miles of trail before reaching our vehicles at McFarland Road.

I think we all enjoyed the camaraderie of both weekends at Lost Creek. In March, five volunteers used the Forest Service campground. In April, this number increased to eight. And while everyone suffered through my cooking for the April weekend, not one person complained! In fact, I saw one or two folks sneak seconds out of the pot!

April Work Trip

by Barry Allen

Springer Mountain in April - just a perfect month to visit the Southern point-of-origin for the Benton MacKaye. When one of my favorite people called me in March and mentioned that her husband was having a milestone birthday and 'could we please celebrate this special day on the trail,' well, it sort-of helped make up my mind. Big Stamp Gap was a great place to host a large group of volunteers. Of course, Debra's offer to provide food for the group had absolutely nothing to do with my decision to help with Phil's birthday. Nor did her offer of cold beverages that may or may not have originated somewhere in the vicinity of Milwaukee. Nor did the mention of desserts that contained many of my favorites. No, I reasoned, Phil and Debra are special people and I absolutely would do anything in my power to help Debra show her love for Phil - all with many of his friends present. And besides, there WAS a bunch of work to do, and the possibility of free food has been known to bring some members of the BMT out of their hibernation. There it was - Big Stamp Gap in April and Happy Birthday to Phil.

Free food! You can bet the turnout was going to be good. Thirty-six volunteers later, I began to get a little uncomfortable. In fact, something dawned on me early in the day: while I was passing out Pulaski's, fire rakes, trail hoes, and McCleod's, I began to be a bit concerned about whether we had enough hamburgers and hotdogs. Or worse yet, what if someone tried to cut in line for the last chocolate chip cookie! Things could get nasty in a hurry. After all, this was David's section of trail. If someone took too big a piece of carrot cake while David was watching and armed with a trail hoe in one hand and a Pulaski in the other, there was no telling what could happen. Normally mild mannered and even-tempered, David was said to be willing to do anything for carrot cake. And he certainly knew where to hide a body on this section.



So, go that-away?

The only saving grace was the work: over 90 water bars to be cleaned, six trees to be cut off the trail, and two signs to be carried into place and installed. Even with 36 people, this was a bunch of work for the day. HOWEVER --- if I drove the group hard, I suspected they would be too tired to fight over a little food in the afternoon. After all, they WERE just coming out of hibernation!

My plan worked to perfection. I drove them hard all morning long and no one had the energy to squabble over a little food at the end of the day. In fact, everyone was downright cordial. Folks that normally elbowed their way to the front of the line were too tired to skirmish over a few hamburgers. And besides, Debra had everything under control. Plenty of food. Plenty of drink. And Ralph Heller to cook.

All in all, a great spring day. Happy 60th Phil! Thanks to all 36 volunteers and to the many newcomers for the day. I wish I could mention you all by name - you are the best. Hope to see you all in the coming months.....

January Hike in April

by Hank Baudet



As hiker Howard Baggett put it, “We decided to do a January hike in April,” and sure enough the temperature was hovering around the freezing mark with the snow coming down pretty hard as we met at the now-closed Piggly Wiggly in Ducktown.

We didn’t get much sunshine but the snow didn’t last long. We enjoyed a nice saunter on Goforth Creek and saw many early spring wild-flowers, as well as our first sighting this spring of a goldfinch. The cascading creek was at a high level, due to a heavy rain, two nights before.



The nine hikers on this April 16th hike included Everett Womack; Ken Cissna, Howard Baggett, Lina Prince, Theresa and Ralph Henning, and their friend Rich Parkhurst who is an excellent photographer and provided the photos with this article, Katie Klemenchic and Hank Baudet, who coordinated the hike.

On the way home, some of us stopped at Bradfords BBQ and enjoyed a nice lunch.

Lady Slipper Hike #1

by Ken Cissna

Joy Forehand wasn't able to lead her traditional "Lady Slipper" hike this year so I decided I could step in even though I couldn't identify half the flowers Joy could or explain anything about the Lady Slipper. I'd done the whole thing a couple of times and significant sections of it many times, so I figured I could get us from Point A (Fall Branch Falls parking lot) to Point B (Weaver Creek Road parking lot). So, on April 25th, six of us—all BMTA members—set off in search of Lady Slippers and other wild flowers as well as a good hike: Darcy Douglas, Sue Harmon, Mike Pilvinsky, Tom Sewell, Everett Womack, and me, Ken Cissna, hike leader.



Sue Harmon, Ken Cissna, Darcy Douglas, and Everett Womack at junction where BMT and Stanley Gap trails diverge. Photo by Tom Sewell.

The first 2.7 miles took us up to Rocky Mountain, a gain of 1334' in 2.7 miles. We started on the "new" trail to Fall Branch Falls—be sure to get out and enjoy it if you haven't seen it. As Gilbert Treadwell has said of this section, from the parking lot to the top of the steep slope where the Stanley Gap Trail joins the BMT is the best maintained section of the BMT (yes, that's my section). As the weather was windy and chilly with rain threatening, we opted not to hike up to the exact top of Rocky Mountain—where Joy likes to lunch—and instead ate quickly just before reaching the apex of the trail and headed on.

The trip down was 3.5 miles and a drop of 1414' (all figures according the *Thru Hikers' Guide*). We saw a great many wildflowers including many lady slippers, but, unfortunately, only a few of the Lady Slippers were blooming. We thought we found a rare yellow Lady Slipper, but geologist and amateur botanist Tom Sewell told us that we hadn't. He explained that the white/pink ones sometimes look a little yellow when they're new.

Thanks to Joy for setting this up—we were sorry you weren't about to make it this year.

May Work Trip

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Section 6 AND Section 11
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, May 12, 2018, 9:00 AM
- ◆ **Meet:** The Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 or Fall Branch Falls at 9:00. OR Thunder Rock Campground on Hwy 64, just past the Ocoee Whitewater Center and behind the Ocoee #3 power plant at 9:00.
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Fall Branch Falls Decommission continued and step repair at Thunder Rock Continued.
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384

Ambitious Plans!

Decommission of the old trail at Fall Branch Falls is beginning on May 4th with a group of volunteers from AT&T, the Forest Service and the BMTA. My expectation is that we will not complete the work on May 4th and will need at least one additional day to complete our portion of the job before trees can be cut down to block the old path. We also have a few steps to install just below Thunder Rock Campground in Tennessee. Material was carried in during the March work event, but we simply did not have time to finish the work.

On May 12th my plan for the day is to complete both projects! I need four-five volunteers for Thunder Rock and will use everyone else to complete odds and ends on the decommission of FBF. Depending on work accomplished on the 4th at FBF, we may need a few volunteers on Friday May 11th to complete work with the Forest Service trail machine installing water diversions on the old trail. But I'll send this out separately.....

Please let me know if you will be able to attend and if you have a preference for location!



Success at BMTA's First Tennessee Festival ... In Spite of the Weather

by The Publicity Committee

It was a rainy, windy day as BMTA's Publicity Team (Jeff DePaola, Ben Yaun and Jason Beck from Georgia and Ruth and Clayton Pannell from Tennessee) arrived at the Ocoee Festival at the Hiwassee / Ocoee State Park in Delano, TN. The festival's mission of the day was to expose attendees to all aspects of outdoor activities available at the park and the area in general ... which included hiking, for which the Benton MacKaye was a perfect fit.

Because of the weather, instead of the usual venue in the campground, the festival had to be moved indoors. Undeterred by the change, the team set up a table and began to get acquainted with festival participants. It was a fortuitous location ... a group of college students from Tennessee Technology University's Wildlife Society were at the table beside the BMTA. The exhibitors from both groups were soon talking and by the end of the festival, the students said they would be interested in participating in some of the BMTA Tennessee work trips!

During the presentations, Clayton Pannell spoke about how the BMTA was started and the problems encountered in getting the BMT through Tennessee. DePaola and Yuan also gave short talks about the BMT. Mason Boring (SAWS) gave an excellent talk on trail maintenance, with attention to manual work in the Wilderness areas. Jack Callahan (President, Cherokee Hiking Club) gave a talk on life on the trail ... with a focus on how to prepare your pack for lightweight travel.

Long-time BMTA member Ruth Pannell said although it was not a big crowd, the attendees were focused and interested in what was going on at the festival ... a lot of people expressed an interest in hiking as well as in doing some trail maintenance!



Mason Boring and Ben Yaun



Jack Callihan



Clayton Pannell and Ben Yaun

BLAZE TEAMS OFF AND RUNNING!

by Darcy Douglas

Well, they are off and walking. Well, off and walking back and forth!! The way people blazing our trail travel often looks rather strange as we check out a possible site for a blaze, then walk back to see if it is the best spot, then walk forward to be sure there isn't another one just up ahead. It's a bit of a dance. We have had several of our teams out already and others have asked to "adopt" sections, just for blazing purposes.

Our goal is to have the blazing of our trail look consistent across all the miles so that unfamiliar hikers are not confused and can find their way.

We have had a lot of fun, and I encourage others who think this might be the way you would like to contribute to our trail maintenance to contact me at bmtadarcyATyahoo.com.

A plea to those maintainers who are no longer painting blazes: **PLEASE RETURN those precious templates to me at your earliest convenience.** Gilbert and I discovered they are not easy to make properly, and we'd sure like to use those we know are the correct dimensions.

Great job so far, Blaze Teams!!!! Thanks!



Upcoming Hikes

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules a minimum of two hikes per month, one of five to eight miles and moderate difficulty, and one that is shorter and easier. In addition, we have occasional backpacking hikes and more difficult ones that might be called “hardy hikes.” Occasionally we co-sponsor hikes with other organizations. Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

If you are interested in leading a hike or have a hike you’d like to see us offer with someone else leading, please contact me at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below—many of these should provide nice wildflowers; some are designed with that in mind. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

For more details, contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741

May

May 14 (Monday) New trails – Talking Rock Nature Preserve.

Two loops, 2.8 and 1.4 miles, both easy. Option for lunch at Biguns BBQ (five minutes away) afterwards.

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741

May 24 (Thursday) Big Frog Mt. via Big Frog Mt. Trail and BMT and return.

11-12 miles total. Moderate to strenuous difficulty uphill first half and downhill last half. Hiking time about 7 hours. Elevation change is 1300’ feet (each way), starting at 2900’ climbing to 4220’ at the top. Beautiful views along the ridge lines.

Contact Hike Leader Tom Sewell at SewellTom AT yahoo.com or text to (706)669-6406

June

June 5 (Tuesday) BMT Dry Gap to Thunder Rock Campground on the Kimsey “Highway.”

5.7 miles; moderate. Starts with an uphill $\frac{3}{4}$ mile 500 feet elevation then downhill all the way to the Ocoee River.

This is a spectacular hike mostly along a ridge. Fifteen mile shuttle. Kimsey “Highway” is a historic Indian Trail. Views at the top of the Hiwassee River Watershed are breath taking. Given the lengthy shuttle, we may do this as a “key exchange” if enough sign up for this event. The two hike leaders are willing to do the harder/uphill portion of the hike.

Contact Hike Leader Tom Sewell at SewellTom AT yahoo.com or text to (706)669-6406

June 15 (Friday) Lake Russell Trail.

Five mile loop, easy. Optional additional 2.7 mile loop to Nancy Town Falls (also easy).

Around beautiful Lake Russell in the 17,300 acre Lake Russell WMA near Cornelia, GA. Great scenery and abundant wildlife. We will start at Nancy Town Lake, circle Lake Russell, cross the dam, and walk through a nice campground, picnic area, and swimming beach.

Contact hike leader Clayton Webster at webs4740 AT bellsouth.net or at 404-633-8955

June 22 (Friday) Shady Falls to Lake Blue Ridge.

Four miles, easy to moderate. In Aska Trail System.

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 813-310-6084

Mark Your Calendars for the Annual Meeting November 2-4 at Coker Creek!!



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