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BMTA Headquarters



JOE SISSON AND THE VALLEY CROSSING PART 1

by Marty Dominy

The area we know as Section 7 of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) was fraught with challenges in the early days of trail development. The geography around the Hayes-ville Fault Line is quite different from the rest of the Blue Ridge and it provides a natural transportation corridor into and out of the Tennessee Valley. U. S. Highway 76 and the old L&N Railroad make use of the Cherry Log Creek Valley while Boardtown Road uses the parallel Boardtown Creek Valley. The Tennessee Valley Divide follows a roundabout course up Long Mountain to the grounds of the courthouse in Blue Ridge before turning back into Gilmer County. It turns once again back into Fannin County before reaching Bushy Head Gap. Forest Service land ends at the west base of Scroggin Knob and resumes at Bushy Head Gap. The straight-line distance between the two is five miles. Any walk route along roads or a trail route through the woods was bound to be longer.

From the base of Scroggin Knob at the county line where Weaver Creek Road in Fannin County and Laurel Creek Road in Gilmer County come together, the original Benton MacKaye Trail followed Laurel Creek Road and the right fork directly out U.S. Highway 76 / Georgia Highway 5 at Cherry Log Baptist Church. There were two dirt roads leading from the Cherry Log Valley to the Boardtown Valley: Maxwell Road to the north and Lucius Road to the south. It was decided that Lucius Road was more practical, so the BMT turned southwest (left) on the highway, northwest (right) on Lucius Road, north (right) on Boardtown Road, and northwest (left) on Bushy Head Gap Road. Keep in mind that at the time Highway 76 was a two-lane road while Lucius Road, Maxwell Road, and Bushy Head Gap Road were dirt roads.

In the 1980s most of the railroads in the eastern United States were consolidated into two companies: Norfolk Southern and CSX. CSX obtained a number of railroads and began closing the redundant, low traffic, and unprofitable routes. This included the old Louisville and Nashville line up the Cherry Log Valley between Ellijay and Blue Ridge. In 1987, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) was getting notices regarding the proposed abandonment of this line and inquired about its use for the BMT for 1.7 miles between the Cherry Log Creek bridge and Lucius Road.



The plan was for the BMT to cross two or three private properties beginning east of Highway 76, pass under the highway bridge over the creek, and intersect the railroad west of the highway, thus eliminating the road walk along Highway 76. This never materialized because local businesses and county governments petitioned to keep the line open. The State of Georgia bought the part of the railroad from Ellijay to McCaysville. Parts of

this operate today as the Blue Ridge Scenic Railroad.



Blue Ridge Scenic Railroad Train



Laurel Creek

There was an interest in determining if a relatively direct off-road route between Scroggin Knob and Bushy Head Gap was possible. In the summer of 1988, copies of tax maps were obtained. These, by themselves, were not much use without the information from the tax digest. So, beginning in October of 1988, landowner identification was performed over the course of a number of trips to the Gilmer County courthouse in Ellijay and the Fannin County courthouse in Blue Ridge. In that day and time, there were no internet searches or electronic files to be had. Someone's best guess at the location of property boundaries was drawn on blueline copies of aerial photographs. This is what constituted tax maps at the time in rural Georgia. This information was passed along to David Sherman, who in turn passed it along to the people who made the segment maps for the Appalachian Trail property acquisition project. Those poor people pulled their hair out trying to get all of the pieces of the puzzle to fit, but eventually put together three segment maps covering the area from Scroggin Knob to Bushy Head Gap. These maps were at a scale of 1:7200 with over three times the detail of a standard topographic map. Two versions of each map were made. The first was for public consumption, showing the land ownership pattern with public information that anyone could obtain by simply doing their own research. The second was for internal use and showed an idealized route for the BMT through the area.

Ted Reissing was a skilled salesman and truly enjoyed meeting and getting to know new people. In 1990, he was also the president of the BMTA. Over the course of his travels in the North Georgia Mountains the following year, Ted was to meet Joe Sisson. Joe was a former educator at the college level, native of the area around Cherry Log, and head of a family business that sold lots and cabins to retirees and those wanting a second home in a less hectic part of the world. Ted explained the concept of the trail to Mr. Sisson and suggested that the BMT might be an amenity for the Sisson development. A more detailed account of this discussion appears in the December 2021 edition of the BMTA Newsletter. With an agreement in principle between the two, details of trail location and easements were turned over to Marty Dominy and Bill Porter.

The story continues in the September Newsletter.

Whigg Ridge / BMT Loop Hike by Rick Harris

On a sunny, warm day, a group of eight hikers met at the Pheasant Fields Picnic Area near the Tellico Fish Hatchery. We hiked six miles up the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) along the Sycamore Creek / BMT Trail beside the old logging railroad grade to Whigg Ridge Road. This is a fairly gentle climb with switchbacks which allowed trains to reverse direction to negotiate the climb up the mountainside. We ate lunch at the campsite by the uppermost switchback. Next, we hiked a short distance to the Whigg Ridge Trailhead, then started steeply down this trail back to the Fish Hatchery. Total distance was 10.3 miles with a climb of about 2300'. Because of the easy grade up the BMT the trek was not too difficult.

On the way, Hike Leader Rick Harris stopped frequently to give some of the logging history of the area and discussed the brook trout reintroduction project.

Hikers were Rick and Brenda Harris (Hike Leaders), their son David and grandson Benton, Nolan Triplett, Kelly Motter, Tom Sewell and Lucia Case.

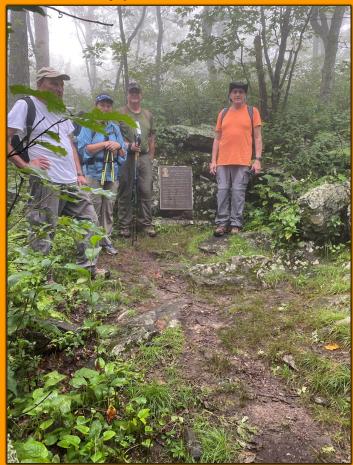






Looping the AT/BMT on Springer Mountain by Kelly Motter

Several hikers joined me on a loop hike of the Appalachian Trail (AT) and the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT). The weather was a bit foggy, but cool, and we avoided the rain! We stopped at the Southern Terminus of the AT and as well as the Southern Terminus of the BMT. Lunch was at Owen Vista, where the fog was slowly lifting. Afterwards, we worked to remove a small blowdown from the trail. Total mileage was 4.7 and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves!







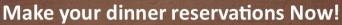
You Won't Want to Miss This Year's

Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

Fontana Village, NC

November 3-6, 2022

For Complete Details, Go to Annual Meeting





Fontana Village Lodge, North Carolina

Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet November 5, 2022

Buffet Entrees

Chicken Piccata

Garden Vegetable Ricotta Lasagna

Smoky Mountain Rainbow Trout

These are accompanied by Tossed Garden Salad, Assorted Artisan Rolls, Roasted Vegetable Medley and Green Bean Almondine. For dessert: Apple Cobbler!

Water ... Sweet / Unsweet Tea & Coffee at Beverage Station.

Additional beverages available at the Cash Bar.

\$30

Dinner Reservations

Payment must be received by October 17, 2022!



For accommodations call 828-498-2211.

To receive your discount
Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!

Just Wandering Around

by Bob Cowdrick

As someone said on the trail during our Georgia Section 8 work day in July, "It seems like we are just wandering around," but that was far from the truth. Four crews of 22 members and guests accomplished quite a bit and it was far from just wandering around.

Andy Meek's Blue Ridge Marine Corps League 8a Crew with Niles Kirchoffer, Dale Greene, Ian Guttridge and Gilbert Treadwell hiked and brushed out 2.5 miles from Bushy Head Gap to Hudson Gap. Not an easy job. They even convinced Gilbert to be an honorary Marine.

George Owen led the 8b Crew. He had help from Robert Pound, Dale Clark, Steve Hayden, Art Kohlberg and Marty Dominy. From Hudson Gap to McKenny Gap, they brushed out 1.5 miles of trail and worked 35 water diversions. Dale, after getting stung twice, vowed never to return to 8b.

Shane Morrison, with the assistance of Steve Dennison, Patrick Ward, Steve Smith and Brian Trinkle, brushed out 1.7 miles of trail from Double Hog Pen to beyond Halloway Gap and cleared 19 water diversions. Add to that a 4-mile round-trip hike into and out of Double Hog Pen Gap, it made for a long day.

Chris Behrens convinced Bob Nelson and Bob Cowdrick to join up with Madison, Daphne and Kenny Martin to work on his crew on 8g brushing from Flat Top to Double Hogpen Gap. When the crew compared miles hiked at the end of the day, someone went 4.2 miles, another went 6.5 miles and still another 12.6 miles. How did that work out?



Mother and daughter, Daphne and Madison brushing.



Kenny and Madison Martin at the trailhead.



Patrick Ward, Steve Dennison, Brian Tinkle and Steve Smith.



Kenny Martin reloading a string trimmer.



Cleared trail.

Let the numbers speak for themselves:

178 Volunteer hours of effort 22 Members and guests attended 54 Water diversions cleaned 10.4 Miles of trail brushed 4 Bee stings

Thanks again to all of you who joined us on the work day. Looking forward to seeing you on our next BMTA GA Work Day on August 13!



Bob Cowdrick, Kenny Martin, Daphne Martin, Madison Martin, Chris Behrens and Bob Nelson.

Raffle!

BMTA's Annual Meeting & Hike Fest November 5, 2022

Fontana Village Lodge, North Carolina

















Proceeds go to

BMTA's Land Acquisition Fund

Tickets available
at the meeting!
\$10 each or 3 for \$25
7 for \$50
16 for \$100























Dally Gap to Jacks River

by Clayton Webster

On July 18, 2022, Tom and Carolyn Sewell led six other hikers on a 6.5-mile loop hike in the Cohutta Wilderness. We began at Dally Gap on the Hemp Top Trail, headed to the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) and on to the Jacks River Trail where we crossed and ate lunch. It was a beautiful day with a gentle breeze every now and then. Rosebay rhododendron was at or near its peak all along our route.



The drive to the trailhead at Dally Gap was beautiful and the mountains seemed to never end!

At Dally Gap there are two different trailheads enabling us to have a loop hike with a tail beginning and ending at the same place but hiking on different trails. Completing this loop means you have to hike a mile further to the River and then turn around and come back the same way. This is a very lush area, but it was sad to see all the hemlock trees either dead or dying from the woolly adelgids. As the trees die and fall, the forest is opened up for other trees and vegetation to thrive. But their shade is needed along the trout streams and their loss has a detrimental effect, especially for trout.

Just a few feet on the trail we came to a sign notifying us we were in a designated Wilderness Area. It stated there was a limit of 12 hikers or eight horses. No mechanized or power equipment is allowed in a Wilderness Area.



Roy Fallon, Jennifer Willis, Dennis Willis, Donna Davis, Steve Hayden and Tom and Carolyn Sewell.



Just .9 miles into our hike, we came upon this recent blowdown. Here the trail is level, but it is straight down the mountain on one side and straight up the mountain on the other side. So, there is no way to go around the tree. Making it harder, grape vines and other saplings were brought down also. So, we crawled! Tom Sewell planned to report it to the trail maintainers.



We had one section of the trail that was also a small stream, but it was easy to rock hop or just walk along without getting water in your boots. Here Donna and Carolyn are picking their way through the stream/trail.



Steve Hayden coming up from a full dunking in the swimming hole at our lunch site!



On our way out we ran into one of our trickier downed tree crossings. Tom Sewell is making sure Donna and everyone else gets safely across.

Our Hike Leader for the day, Tom Sewell, is also the Hiking Director for the BMTA. He has a great group of trip leaders for the many hikes that are scheduled each month. His wife Carolyn was the sweep for our hike, and she made sure everyone was doing okay as we made our way.

This hike made us realize how fortunate we are to have such great wilderness and other undeveloped areas that we can explore and enjoy!



GA Work Trip—August 13, 2022

Section 4a-b - Skeenah Gap >> Wilscot Gap

- Water diversions
- Brushing
- Blazing

Register for the Georgia Trip Now!



Adventure Scientists Need Your Help

Calling all **Georgia** hikers, backpackers, climbers and cavers! Do you explore the foothills of the Appalachian Trail? Perhaps you prefer subterranean adventuring, spending time in the mountains to explore the secrets caves hold. Or maybe you're a climber that likes to watch the world from above.

Join us as a volunteer to protect eastern white oaks from timber poaching. These mighty trees provide important food and habitat for deer, small mammals and birds as well as stabilize the waterways where fish and amphibians live.

Grab your hiking buddy, fellow caver or climbing partner, and sign up today to receive your free online training and data collection kit at https://lnkd.in/d7qEn9j. Your volunteer efforts will help the U.S. Forest Service protect the ecosystems you enjoy. We look forward to seeing you out there!

https://www.adventurescientists.org/timber-volunteer-homepage.html

Lightning!!!

by Joy Forehand

The recent postponement of the July 9, 2022, Georgia Work Trip was a reminder of one of the biggest nemeses of work trips – lightning.

According to the CDC, approximately 40 million lightning strikes hit the United States each year. Between 2006 and 2021, there were 444 lightning strike deaths in the United States. An individual's chance of being hit by lightning is less than one in a million. Still, a few people have been hit more than once. Roy C. Sullivan, an ex-park ranger, was struck seven times – a record that is listed in the Guiness Book of World Records.

There are many dos and don'ts when caught outside during a thunderstorm – some may surprise you.

What to avoid:		What to do:
Mountain tops and ridges	Trail shelters	Seek shelter in the lowest area.
Open fields	Caves	In the woods, stay near a group of shorter trees. Crouch on the balls of your feet. Keep your head down. Do not touch the ground with your hands.
Locations near water	Trailers	
Isolated trees	Tents	When hiking or maintaining trail, place any metal tools, backpacks with metal frames, trekking poles - anything metal -100 feet away from you.
Picnic shelters	Anything metal	
		If in a group, the members of the group should stay 100 feet apart.

Employing the 30-30 Rule can be a guide to let you know you're in the danger zone during a thunderstorm. If the time from the flash to the thunder is less than 30 seconds, you need to seek shelter immediately. Do not venture out until 30 minutes after the last roll of thunder.

Lifesaving CPR skills can be a godsend when someone is struck by lightning – it may be hours before a 911 crew can respond to a remote location.

The time to prepare for such an emergency is now! First aid training is available through the Red Cross and the American Heart Association. Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) trail workers and hike leaders may want to take advantage of First Aid classes offered through the association. Trail workers should contact Bob Cowdrick or Keith Mertz; hike leaders, contact Tom Sewell.

https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/lightning/victimdata.html

https://americanhiking.org/resources/lightning-safety/

https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/most-lightning-strikes-survived

WANTED! TWO OR THREE STRONG HANDS!

The Signs Committee would like to add two or three people to call on periodically to install the signs that the committee co-chairs Ralph Heller and George Owen design and deliver for installation.

If you would be willing to join the few others on this committee, and/or for more information contact:

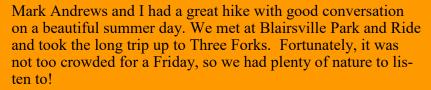
George Owen, gowen2@tds.net

Ralph Heller, rshbmta@gmail.com



While on the Trail

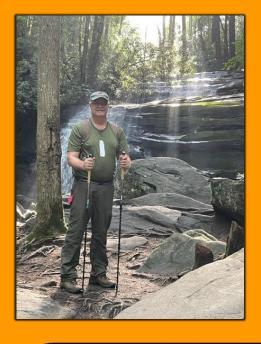
by Kelly Motter



Mark had never been to this area, so we enjoyed the waterfalls first then followed that with a hike up to the bald. All in all, it was a very relaxing trip.

The trail looked great with perhaps just a bit of loping needed.

We picked up the small amount of trash found and took it out. This was Mark's first trip with the BMTA and we hope he comes out for more!





TN/NC Work Trip—August 27, 2022

Section 16b – Round Top >> Sledrunner Gap

Heart of Darkness

- Brushout
- Logout

Please bring a brushcutter if you have one.

Register for the TN/NC Trip Now!

Blazing Away!

by Darcy Douglas

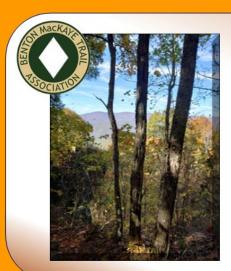
A few years ago, we decided to create a system for consistent blazing of our trail. Previously, each person who maintained a section was to blaze their own section. That resulted in a wide variety of blazes – varying sizes, shapes, frequency and more! It also meant people had a lot of dried-up paint at home. They had to blaze rather than do the work they preferred, such as sawing fallen trees or seemingly more necessary work like clearing poison ivy and other summer growth. Some sections were nicely blazed and easy for hikers to find their way. Other sections weren't blazed at all. Most were in between. Consistency was clearly lacking and hikers did report confusion!

Since I had already tried many techniques, some of which worked well, others not so well, I was asked to establish this system. What anyone on the Blaze Team today knows is that it is a lot more complicated than it looks! It takes a person of discerning intellect to be a good blazer. There are many decisions to be made before, during and after the process. As one newer Blazer said - as he gets older and has health issues precluding certain aspects of maintaining, he is grateful to be able to still participate in trail maintenance using this skillset.

Now we are having our very first retirement of a Blazer. Cynthia Tehan learned to blaze several years ago. One of her first trips with us was in the Heart of Darkness in Tennessee. She was a real trooper that day—a very, very long day, which included a LONG walk, a huge rattlesnake and the need to drink a great deal of water. She did come back and often teamed up with Cary Page to complete many miles of trail over the years. And she didn't even live here full time!!! Cynthia and her husband have a cabin here for visits. He was still working in Florida until recently. Now, for several reasons, they have decided to move back to the Tampa area full time. Cynthia, we very much appreciate your excellent service, your attention to detail and your willingness to do just about anything!! You will be sorely missed by the Blaze Team!!! Best of luck with your future endeavors friend!!

Losing such a faithful person made me realize some others might wish to learn how to do this very significant task! If you think you'd like to know more, please let me know.

You can reach me either by email at hikeleaderDD@bmtamail.org or by phone 404-431-3614.



Quest for National Scenic Trail

Our Continued Success Depends on YOU!

If You Love the BMT and You Live in the United States —
 Please ask your Senators/Representative to support our quest.

Ask your friends and family to contact their

Congressional representatives as well.

Use the links below to find your Senators/Representative.

<u>Senator</u>

Representative

Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Tom Sewell, Hiking Director

Guidelines for Our Hikes

Because hiking in the outdoors is good for one's mental and physical health, we encouraged BMTA members and others to continue hiking during the COVID-19 health crisis *and to do so safely*. Thus, we continued our hiking program during 2020 and 2021.

Due to the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, we have further modified our hiking program:

- We have resumed allowing shuttle hikes but caution that (a) no hikers should ride with another or have another ride with them if they are concerned about their safety and (b) unvaccinated hikers should not assume that others will want to ride in vehicles with them.
- Carpooling is permitted but not required.
- Any potential hiker who is feeling ill or has been exposed recently to a person with an active case of COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
- Hikes are limited to a maximum of 10 participants in Tennessee and North Carolina and 12 participants in Georgia. Hike leaders may impose lower limits.
- Masks are optional, but hikers should maintain an appropriate distance from one another.

August



August 13 (Saturday) GA Work Trip. Section 8 Bushy Head Gap >> Fowler Mountain
Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net.

August 26 (Friday) Emery Creek. Moderate 5 miles. The trail for this in-and-out hike is fairly easy, but 26 stream crossings (a number up to your ankles and two around your knees) and a section of potentially slippery rock toward the beginning and 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 <u>hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org</u>.



August 27 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip Section 16b Heart of Darkness – Sled Runner Gap to Un-named gap south of Round Top. Contact Keith Mertz keithmertz@hotmail.com.

August 31 (Wednesday) BMT from Towee Creek to Childers Creek, 4.2 miles. The trail parallels the Hiawassee River with beautiful views of the river and rocky outcrops. The trail gets very close to the river as we hike south towards Childers Creek. Hike Leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan. For more information contact hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org.

Continued next page

September

September 2 (Friday) Yonah Mountain Trail -This climb of some 1,700 feet features awesome views from the top of the rugged rock-hewn summit trail. Overall, the hike is somewhat over five miles in and out. Hike Leader Michael Pilvinsky. For more information contact hikeleaderMP@bmtamail.org



September 10 (Saturday) GA Work Trip - Clean Trails Day at Fall Branch Falls and the Swinging Bridge. Watch the website for details! Contact Bob Cowdrick@comcast.net.

September 16 (Friday) BMT in Tennessee between Ducktown and Coker Creek. Highway 68 to Buck Bald with 360 degree views and return. A total of 3 miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleader SD@bmtamail.org.

September 17 (Saturday) BMT off the Cherohala Parkway in Tellico Plains, Tennessee. A great, short, moderate 4.5-mile round-trip from Mud Gap to Whigg Meadow. This special hike will give us an opportunity to learn about the annual bird banding and data collection that has taken place at Whigg Meadow. Hike Leader Kelly Motton. For more information contact hikeleaderKM@bmtamail.org.



September 24 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip Contact Keith Mertz keithmertz@hotmail.com.

September 26 (Monday) BMT from Highway 60 to the Suspension Bridge and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 7.4 miles. Lunch by the Toccoa River and the BMT's iconic Suspension Bridge. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

October

October 3 (Monday) BMT Dyer Gap to Shadow Falls (South Forks Trail to intersection of the Pinhoti) about 5 moderate miles round-trip. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

October 7 (Friday) Shady Falls Trailhead to Lake Blue Ridge and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 7 miles. Views of Lake Blue Ridge including very close up during mid-hike lunch. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



October 8 (Saturday) GA Work Trip. Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net. October 14 (Friday) BMT in Tennessee between Ducktown and Coker Creek. Highway 68 to Buck Bald with 360 degree views and return. A total of 3 miles. Hike Leader Anne Anderson. For more information contact https://doi.org/10.1007/journal.org.

October 21 (Friday) BMT Highway 515 to Weaver Creek and return. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy 5 miles mostly along dirt roads. One "rock hopping" stream crossing could get your feet wet depending on stream levels and recent rainfall. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information hikeleader KC@bmtamail.org.

Trails Skills Workshop September 24-25

The annual Trail Skills Workshop (TSW), will be held at Lake Winfield Scott (Suches, GA) September 24-25, 2022. This training event is focused on teaching the most current trail construction and maintenance methods for Eastern landscapes. It is applicable for all skill levels. Expert instructors are from the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), the United States Forest Service (FS) and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC).

In addition to introductory and advanced trail maintenance, this year's offering includes courses on rock construction, log cribbing and sawyering. The courses are offered so participants can attend different classes each day or dig in on one track for in-depth knowledge.

For more information and to preregister scan the QR Codes, or Contact: Jay M Dement, 404-731-1901, tsw@georgia-atclub.org.



Preregister



Brochure



2022 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!



ALDHA



AMVETS POST 911
POLK COUNTY, TN



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CABIN RENTALS



DE LEON PROPERTY
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KOREAN ALPINE CLUB
OF GEORGIA



MOUNTAIN WISDOM CAMP



NORTH GEORGIA TREKS
PHOTOGRAPHY



OCOEE ANIMAL HOSPITAL



SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS

2022 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!



SPIRITS KNOB
JEFFREY DEPAOLA (404) 550-4488



STAR MOUNTAIN OUTFITTERS



THE DUCKTOWN COPPER INN



THE HIKE INN
FONTANA DAM, NORTH CAROLINA



THE JUSTIS LAW FIRM LLC



WILDWOOD MAGIC

The deadline for the September Newsletter is Wednesday, August 31.

Thank you!



MEMBERSHIP

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TRAIL STORE

DONATE — LAND ACQUISITION FUND