



Sue Turner puts the first name in the GET trailhead register.



Sue joins Wendi Merritt for an impromptu Backpacking 101 session with conference attendees.

And She's Off! Sue Turner Hits the GET! (04/03/2007)

Sue "Hammock Hanger" Turner has started her adventure to be the first person to thru-hike the Great Eastern Trail.

After spending the weekend with AHTS at our conference atop Cheaha Mountain, past AHTS president Erik Douglas drove Sue to the Alabama-Florida state line and the AHTS kiosk that marks the beginning of a trip that will take her over 1,700-miles to northern New York.

Sue made MANY new friends during the conference, each willing to lend a hand as she makes her way northward through the state. She was even kind enough to join Wendi Merritt for an impromptu backpacking 101 workshop where Wendi (who just completed the Pinhoti in Alabama) and Sue demonstrated what they carry on a long-distance hike.

We all wish Sue the very best on her journey. We'll be with her every step of the way!

Read an article about the start of Sue's journey from the [Brewton Standard](#).

You can follow Sue on her journey online at trailjournals.com/hammockhangerget06

Learn more about the GET on the trail's official website - www.greateastertrail.org.

Hammock's Hike

By Lydia Grimes - feature writer for Brewton Standard.Com

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The weather did not look promising Monday morning, but it did not deter "Hammock Hanger" from her plans.

Sue Turner, better known by her hiking name, "Hammock Hanger," was ready to begin a new hike, and bad weather was not going to stand in her way.

Turner is the first to walk a new trail that begins at the Alabama-Florida line, one that local hikers have been busy setting up.

Eric Douglas and Johnny Miller of Brewton have been mapping out the new trail for some time.

They will see their hard work pay off as Turner makes her way through the Conecuh National Forest. She is the first woman to take the new trail, which will link the Florida trail to others along the way to her destination in upstate New York.

Douglas said the new trail is a dream come true for him.

"I have been back-packing in the Rockies before but wanted to find something a little closer to home," he said.

"The trails in Florida didn't quite link up to ones in Alabama. All the hiking trails in Conecuh National Forest are

in Covington County and in the eastern part of the forest. I got the idea to connect them and began to chat online on the Internet. We formed a committee, and from that meeting came the Alabama Hiking Trail Society.”

Minor problems along the way posed no hindrance to the overall goal, Douglas said.

“Every time we had a problem, we would have a door open for us,” he said. “We established a route from Rock Creek at the end of the Florida National Scenic Trail. From there it becomes the Alabama Roadwalk, which is an old road. The trail leads to the Alabama Penhote Trail, which links up to the Great Eastern Trail. Sue will be the first to hike the new trail.”

According to a press release, the connected trails are more than 1,700 miles from the Alabama-Florida state line to the Finger Lakes in New York. The trail is an alternate to the Appalachian Trail which is now used by many hikers. The new trail will be more primitive with fewer encounters along the way, Douglas said. Turner is expected to be able to see some of the most beautiful and primitive countryside, much like the Appalachian Trail was in the early 1920s.

“When I headed out on the AT in 2001, I didn't want to overwhelm myself with the prospect of walking 2,000-plus miles,” Turner said.

“I set small goals for myself and celebrated when those goals were obtained. I will take it trail by trail, kind of like the old saying ‘one step at a time’ or ‘one foot in front of the other.’”

Turner said she has her back-pack down to around 25 pounds.

“It is at 13 pounds base and then depending on how much food I am carrying it can go up to 21-25 pounds,” she said. “That is very doable, especially since I headed out on the AT with a 55-pound pack. I know the lighter pack is the only thing that allows my knees to keep me moving.”

Turner said her biggest obstacle are the “feelings of homesickness” for her husband - but this time she has a plan.

“It is (at) about the six-week period that I start to get really crazy. This year (my husband) will meet me at Trail Days and we will spend some time together after the festival. Then I will take a vacation from the trail in July, to go home and see him and the kids.

“Lastly he will come out to see me either at the end of the hike or for my birthday if the hike seems to be going past the month of August.”

Turner hopes to complete the journey by mid-September. She invites all of those who are interested to follow her adventure at her online journal at <http://trailjournals.com/entry.cfm?trailname=4974>.

GET Hiker Calls it a Day by Tom Johnson (American Hiking Society -06/04/2007)

Our first thru-hiker, Sue Turner (AKA Hammock Hanger) has given up her quest for this year. The road walking down south, the heat, and the lack of water have all conspired against her. I don't know where she is right now, but suspect that she was somewhere on the Allegheny Trail when she quit.

The weather and road walking down south were deterrents, but she was hoping to make it through that stretch before she gave out. It didn't happen. Even when she got further north, where the trail is more continuous and the weather would hopefully be more cooperative, the remoteness of the trail presents serious resupply issues. The Great Eastern Trail is not like the AT, and there is a chance that it never will be. That is the downside, but it is also the upside. Eventually we hope that the scenic beauty of these more remote locales will make the GET what the AT once was - a pathway through the wilderness.

I want to thank all of you who helped her through your respective stretches of trail, or were preparing to do so. I know that it required a great deal of planning and effort on the part of many people. She encountered true southern hospitality. Would that she could have enjoyed our northern friendliness as well.

Tom Johnson