

# Georgia Forestwatch Events 2003

October 4<sup>th</sup> Old Growth Presentation for NE Georgia Hiking Club & other members 7 pm

Clarksville Library

October 10<sup>th</sup> Open House to meet new GFW Executive Director ~ All invited

October 18<sup>th</sup> SAMAB Training for Walnut Mountain Residents

November 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Members Conference & Hike

November 20<sup>th</sup> Old Growth Presentation 7 pm Dahlonega North GA Sierra Club Meeting

December 5<sup>th</sup> GFW Volunteer Banquet

All outings are a perk for GFW members. To join, see form below. As additional events or outings are planned they will be posted on the Georgia Forestwatch website: [www.gafw.org](http://www.gafw.org)

For more info call 706.635.8733

## ..... Speaking of Healthy Forests

### A broad-based framework for forest restoration

What's the best way to nurse a sick forest back to health? While Congress has centered much of its healthy forest debate on fire, another influential group has taken a much broader view. Georgia Forestwatch is one of 120 organizations from across the nation that endorses a set of principles that rely on common sense and good science to reverse the effects of decades of intensive resource extraction and other harmful activities in America's forests. Developing the *Citizens' Call for Ecological Restoration: Forest Restoration Principles and Criteria* took a diverse group of forest activists and ecologists two years. GFW Ecologist Katherine Medlock participated in this process. She says the *Principles* are designed to:

- § Help educate members of Congress and their staff about good and bad forest restoration and how ecological forest restoration should be implemented
- § Serve as a planning and implementation tool for forest watch activists, forest practitioners, and scientists
- § Help determine if restoration projects are actually restoring ecological integrity and meeting restoration objectives

The *Forest Restoration Principles* contrast with the so-called *Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003* and the administration's *Healthy Forest Initiative*, in that the former focuses on the ecological and social needs of a specific area, while the later act and initiative reduce public participation and apply a *one-size-fits-all* approach to forest ecology. You can read more about the *Principles* online at:

<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/Programs/restoration/principles.pdf>

## GEORGIA FORESTWATCH MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:

**GEORGIA FORESTWATCH, 15 Tower Rd., Ellijay, GA 30540**

credit card info:

we accept..... MC Visa AMEX *circle one*

# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ 

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

(please, circle one)	Individual	Joint
Student/Senior	\$15	\$20
Regular	\$25	\$30
Generous	\$50	\$75
Extra Generous	\$100	\$150
Gilded	\$200	\$300
Life	\$350	\$500

~All taxes deductible~



Georgia Forestwatch

# FOREST NEWS

*Protecting and Restoring Georgia's Native Ecosystems*

## Summertime

*in the*

## Uncut Forests of North Georgia

*Single largest stand so far located by Forestwatch*

This summer, Georgia Forestwatch staff and more than 20 volunteers returned to the steep and remote areas of the Chattahoochee National Forest in search of more old growth tracts. Obviously, the ruggedness of these areas made road building difficult or impossible and the often-stunted forests made a less than irresistible target for early 1900s timber companies. Entering several of these stands tested our agility. We sometimes had to scramble around cascades. Most tracts show a change in forest structure and slope at their more subtle edges. Once we passed an edge, we made observations on the species in each layer of the canopy and looked for signs of any human disturbance, such as old chestnut stumps or old roadbeds.

On most days, we collected two or three core samples to determine tree ages. Species, bark characteristics, crown architecture, and a lack of signs of hollowing influenced our selection of trees to core, but tree size was largely ignored. More than half of the trees we cored, which averaged 157 years old and included one 308-year-old white oak, were chestnut oaks. The species is well adapted to the dry, rocky, nutrient-poor conditions that are prevalent on Georgia's steepest mountainsides. Due to those poor conditions, these old oaks rarely reach two feet in (see *Old Growth*, p. 3)



Board member Dudley Sisk with a 308-year-old White Oak at Wolf Knob. Photo by Jess Riddle.

Georgia Forestwatch  
15 Tower Rd.  
Ellijay, GA 30540

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 Printed on 100%  
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15 Tower Rd.  
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Georgia Forestwatch is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational corporation.

**Staff**

Deborah Royston, Executive Director  
Katherine Medlock, Staff Ecologist  
Jennifer Rodriguez, Office Manager

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Dudley Sisk  
James Sullivan

Deborah Royston edited this edition of Forest News

## Welcome, Deborah Royston!

We are delighted to announce Deborah Royston as the new Executive Director of Georgia Forestwatch!

Over the past few years, Debbie has served as the Vice President of the Birmingham Hopewell Alliance, a non-profit organization established to address regional land use issues in North Fulton County. She is a co-founder of the Little River Valley Association, a grassroots community organization established to protect and restore regional water quality and wildlife habitat. In the mid-1990's Debbie also served as the Director of Public Affairs for the city of Alpharetta. In these roles, Debbie

has accumulated a great deal of experience in fundraising, grassroots organizing, and addressing conservation issues.

Debbie's 15 years of experience as a professional communicator will also benefit Georgia Forestwatch. Previously, she worked as a staff writer for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and as a frequent contributor to Bill Shipp's Georgia newsletter and other Georgia publications. Most recently, she worked as a senior writer for Scientific Games International in Alpharetta.

Look for Debbie's future editorials in this space and please join us in welcoming Debbie as our newest member of the GFW team!

## Salamander Survey UPDATE

### Survey turns up salamanders and more

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Hellbender photo by Dudley Sisk

Results from a recent Georgia Forestwatch survey conducted in the Chattahoochee National Forest by two University of Georgia herpetologists and funded by Patagonia are in: At least five species of salamanders live in the beautiful and remote Kelly Ridge roadless area of Northeast Georgia. Matt Elliott and Stacy Smith also found the menacing hemlock woolly adelgid living within 8,500-acre tract. Read more about this exotic insect species that threatens beloved hemlocks in this newsletter.

The salamander discoveries bode well for efforts aimed at preserving the wild forests of Kelly Ridge, characterized by north-facing coves and

high botanical diversity. Timber harvesting and road building activities have been linked to declining salamander populations in Georgia and throughout the Southeast.

**At-risk species documented**

Elliott and Smith found Hellbender and Seepage salamanders, both of which are threatened by stream sedimentation and listed as vulnerable by the Georgia Natural Heritage Program. The salamander survey also turned up Seal and Ocoee salamanders, as well as the Shovel-nosed salamander, a species uncommon to the Hiwassee watershed area.

Georgia Forestwatch thanks Patagonia and the many volunteers

for their help with this important study. The results have increased our understanding of the ecological significance of Kelly Ridge and provided more grounds for adding this land to Georgia's wilderness inventory. - Katherine Medlock

**Editor's Note:** Patagonia pledges at least 1 percent of sales to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment.

For more information about their programs and the groups they support, go to [www.patagonia.com/enviro](http://www.patagonia.com/enviro).

## Invasive Exotic Threatens Hemlocks

The hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) was first confirmed in Georgia in the Chattooga River watershed in Rabun County in 2001. A Georgia Forestry Commission survey in early 2003 found that the boundaries of the infested area had increased. The infestation had spread down the Chattooga River to near GA Highway 28 at Russell Bridge and up the West Fork Chattooga River tributaries. There had been no other reports of HWA in Georgia until Georgia Forestwatch and UGA folks working on the Kelly Ridge salamander survey discovered infested trees in the Swallow Creek watershed in Towns County. Late this summer a very low intensity infestation was noted in a headwater tributary of the Tallulah River.

HWA, a native of Asia where hemlocks seem to be resistant to attack, was introduced to the eastern US in Virginia in the 1950s. It has now spread north to southern New England and south to Georgia. The adelgid damages trees by sucking sap from young twigs causing the needles to discolor and drop and by preventing new twig growth. Defoliation and tree death can occur within several years of infestation, although some trees survive longer. Tree mortality on a huge scale is being documented in the middle Atlantic states.

The Georgia Forestry Commission in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and the Georgia Department of Resources will be conducting surveys throughout the range of hemlock in Georgia this fall, winter and spring. The agencies will be developing a unified reporting system that agency personnel and citizens can use to report suspected infestation of HWA. Documentation of infested areas is key to developing strategies for release of a tiny predator beetle now approved for use in fighting HWA.

For more information about HWAs and to view excellent photos of infested trees, go to: <http://www.fs.fed.us/na/morgantown/fhp/hwa/hwasite.html>

-James Sullivan

*Old Growth*, continued from page 1

diameter or 75 feet tall. However, we occasionally saw dry rocky coves and slightly richer slopes that escaped timber companies' gazes and still supported scattered chestnut oaks that reached 40 inches in diameter and climbed 100 feet tall. Often when we found such trees or noticed the topography beginning to flatten, we began to hold our breath, realizing the incentive for and means to log those areas existed. Usually, before going much farther, we would see sawn chestnut stumps or a strip of flat ground on a slope indicating past logging. However, on one mountain near the west edge of the forest, we followed multiple streams through towering forest and across some gentle slopes without ever seeing signs of past disturbance. The old growth on the mountain ranges reaching 1,800-plus feet elevations includes several distinct forest types, and covers more than 1000 acres, representing the single largest stand so far located by Forestwatch. - Jess Riddle

## Healthy Forests Initiative

*Taking our leaders to task*

At newsletter press time, the U.S. Senate was expected to take up the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HR 1904) any day. Thanks to all who contacted senators in September on National Call in Day and asked them to reject HR 1904 in favor of a bill that, among other things:

- \* Protects communities at risk from wildfire
- \* Expedites projects around communities
- \* Keeps environmental laws intact
- \* Protects currently healthy forests
- \* Provides funding for forest and watershed restoration

The outcome of this debate and the resulting legislation stand to tremendously impact our National Forests and Bureau of Land Management-administered lands for many years to come. Please stay tuned for updates on this important issue or visit the frequently updated Web sites of Georgia Forestwatch partner groups:

- \* American Lands Alliance at [www.americanlands.org](http://www.americanlands.org)
- \* Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition at [www.safc.org](http://www.safc.org)

