Summer 2001

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Georgia ForestWatch

FOREST NEWS

Protecting and Restoring Our Native Forest Diversity

Inside This Issue . . .

Editorial 2
Brookies 3
Calendar 4
Welcome Intern 4
Retreat 5
Updates 5
Of Moths and Men 6
Toccoa Update 6
Cohutta in Peril 6
Grassroots Lobby Week 7
Timber Program Loses 7
Fundraising Update 8
ORV Impact Study 8

"A river seems a magic thing. A magic, moving, living part of the very earth itself" — Laura Gilpin

Civilian Conservation Corp Camp at Potato Patch Mountain – Cohutta Ranger District – 1930s

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GFW Editorial

by Brent Martin, GFW Executive Director

According to the *Journal of American Forestry*, forest ownership has been increasing 1.6 times faster than our population and by 2010 it is estimated that about 95 percent of the nation's private forest ownership will be in parcels less than 100 acres. Look around you in north Georgia, or look around you in central Georgia, and you know it's true: everyone wants their own piece of forest. The two main reasons for this trend are the two things that we have been assured of with absolute certainty our entire lives: death and taxes. The original owner of a large tract of land dies, divides it among the heirs, who divide it again to be sold to developers who further divide it to the mass of Americans who want their own piece of forest nirvana. Or the original owner can no longer afford to pay the property taxes on his or her property, realizes that there is a much higher value to be realized on the land than waiting for his or her Loblolly pines to reach maturity, and sells the land off to developers who butcher it immediately into 5 and 10 acres lots. What does this mean for the landscape and its diverse inhabitants, and what does this mean for the future?

First, it means that our grandkids are going to have a whole lot less. The parcelization of forestland is projected to continue well into the century and the planet isn't growing (North Georgia alone lost almost 100,000 acres of forest land in the last decade to development. Towns County gets first place at 24,070). Second, it means that we're most likely to lose a lot of forestland to development and other uses, as many forest owners will choose to convert their land as land values rise and development pressure increases. Fragmentation. A bad word in those Cerulean Warbler households. Third, it means that our publicly owned forests will skyrocket in value, and will be our last strongholds of biodiversity, unfragmented forest, and solitude. Who knows what pressures we will face someday in their defense. For now, however, we have opportunity. For while the planet surely will not grow, our public forests can. A brief window exists to acquire what little land we can through good programs like Forest Legacy and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, both of which Georgia is eligible to receive funding through.

This year an unprecedented 2.8 million dollars is earmarked for new acquisitions on the Chattahoochee and four million is earmarked for new acquisitions in the Chattooga river watershed - if the current proposed budget survives House and Senate negotiations. Georgia Forestwatch has lobbied in DC to keep the budget intact, and to even get these numbers increased, so write those Congressional Representatives and Senators. Tell them to support the current Georgia budget for Land and Water Conservation fund dollars, and to work to get the dollars increased. Also tell them to support the full funding of Forest Legacy - a program which Georgia has only recently applied for and which will land us $500,000 next year for the acquisition of Conservation Easements. Granted, it's a pittance, but the numbers increase dramatically after year one. Small steps, that need to be faster, but steps nonetheless. With enough of them, who knows, maybe we can outrun a future already planned for us.

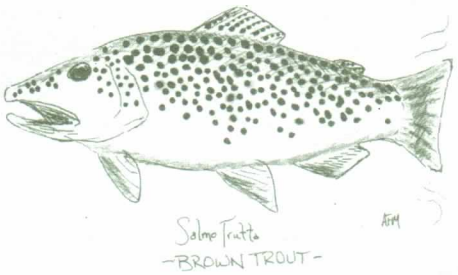
GFW Newsletter is now on line

If you would like to help save paper and cancel your newsletter subscription, contact Valerie at the GFW office or you can send her an email at valeriew@ellijay.com. Arrangements can be made by request to send you a reminder post card or email notice when the quarterly newsletters are posted on the website.

Non-native Fish Threaten Local Aquatic Diversity

by Angela Faye Martin, GFW Watershed Program Coordinator

Georgia's crayfish and possibly other species such as darters suffer from predation and marginalization from non-native, introduced fish. Our land management agencies are being challenged to look hard at the way they manage our public lands aquatic fauna in the midst of our culture of sport fishing demands and state game fishery programs. While trout fulfills a particular public demand, they also pose very real threats to less domineering fauna such as darters and crayfish.



This issue is only beginning to take the forefront of Southern Appalachian land management decisions such as instream structural modifications accommodating stocked, non-native fish. In past years, it has been common practice in many cases for the Forest Service to backhoe pools in streams in order to create habitat for scarcely reproducing trout in Georgia. A little known fact is that brook trout, lovingly referred to as "brookies", are the only naturally occurring trout of the Southern Appalachians. However, brook trout lived in Tennessee River basin portions of Georgia and were never in the Coosa River basin (Dr. Byron Freeman). Stream temperature is implicated in the evolution and survival of trout species thus eliminating the Coosa system as viable habitat. Other interest is that: brook trout are more susceptible to angling and predation (Fausch and White 1986).

Perusal of the stomachs of brown trout yield young crayfish. But this is an area of study that has been grossly under studied in our region. The state of California has attempted to eradicate the brown trout in some areas in order to preserve the native golden trout. Introduced rainbow trout eat endangered humpback chubs in the Little Colorado River and may exert a major negative effect on the population there (Marsh and Douglas 1997). But finding data to understand the effects of these species on our native chubs is difficult, at best.

Both rainbows and browns have been introduced to waters outside their natural range since, roughly, the turn of the century.

The brown trout was first imported to the United States in 1883 by the U.S. Fish Commission (Mather 1889; Courtenay et al. 1984). Rainbows are at least, native to this continent. However their natural range is our seven, westernmost states including Alaska, but not Hawaii.

The red shiner, native to central plains down to Texas, and seemingly less imposing fish competes for habitat with our native fish. The red shiner is a widespread and commonly used bait fish; it is also in the aquarium trade (Becker 1983; Etnier and Starnes 1993). It has been marketed in a pet shop under the name "rainbow dace" (Moore et al. 1976). Furthermore, in degraded streams in Georgia, introduced red shiners have become one of the most abundant species (Devivo and Freeman 1995).

Fact: Our culture, on the whole, elevates demand for sport fish over darters and crayfish. This is one fact we may accept but not one we necessarily have to live with or perpetuate.

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Oconee Update

by J.P. Schmidt, Oconee District Leader

There is continuing dialog on the effect and appropriation of fire in different habitat types in the Oconee District. I have been on several hikes with Barnie Gyant from the US Forest Service, Oconee Ranger District. They have been monitoring the effects of the USFS controlled burns, which I feel happen too often. Historically, natural fires don't happen as often as the USFS does them.

The damage to the areas we surveyed appears to be minimal and it looks pretty good overall with little obvious irreversible damage. However, the Azaleas did not produce any blooms this year as a result of the controlled burns. Also, the fires have the potential to eliminate mature muscadine vines which are an important food source to game species. I believe controlled burns should only be done once every two years in order to keep the impact low. The USFS receives $21.00 per acre for controlled burns which is allotted by Congress from the Department of Agriculture.

I would like to thank Barnie for all his help and support in monitoring the controlled burns.

Thanks ForestWatchers!!

Georgia ForestWatch staff would like to thank all of you who returned our planning surveys in such a prompt mater!

You all had such wonderful things to say about GFW staff, Board and our volunteers and provided us with valuable information.

We have compiled the information and plan to address your comments at our Strategic Planning Meeting in July. We hope this will allow GFW to better serve our members.

JOIN US FOR THE GFW ANNUAL RETREAT

Our Annual Retreat will be held August 24 - 26, at The Center for New Beginnings in Dahlonega. Our retreat is a family friendly event and there will be organized activities for children.

We will be sending out a flyer in July with complete details, an agenda and cost factors for the retreat. Space is limited so we encourage you to register early. Some scholarships will be available.

The Center for New Beginnings has a variety of living quarters including, bunk houses, private rooms and camping. The food is excellent, the environment is cozy, wooded, peaceful, secluded and natural.

Jess Riddle Joins Georgia ForestWatch as Old Growth Surveyor

Some of you might remember the story we did sometime ago on old growth prodigy Jess Riddle, or read Martha Ezzard's story on him in the AJC. He currently has 39 state champion trees to his credit Well now he's working for us! Fresh out of high school and armed with a long history of old growth study (he started when he was about six), Jess is working for us over the summer to do old growth surveys on the Chattahoochee National Forest. Jess is groundtruthing Forest Service data that has been identified as potential or possible old growth, as well as surveying sites that he has identified over the years. At the end of the summer, and before taking off to Furman College, Jess will compile his results and present them at our Annual Retreat. Though a great deal of work will remain to be done, this will nonetheless produce some preliminary data that will help us guide the Forest Planning process for old growth. The Forest Service will also be working over the next year to survey old growth, and we are coordinating with them closely. If you would like more information, or know of potential sites on the forest, give us a call.

Georgia ForestWatch Calendar

August 2-5	Buckarama in Jonesboro – volunteers needed!
August 18	Snorkeling on the crystal clear Conasauga River, family oriented, It's like being inside of a giant aquarium! One of our favorites, led by Jim Herring, Fisheries Biologist andAngela Martin, GFW Watershed Program Coordinator.
August 19	Snorkeling on the Conasauga, adult oriented.
August 24-26	GFW Retreat
Sept. 15-16	Wildlife Arts Festival in Blue Ridge – volunteers needed!
October 20-21	Georgia Apple Festival in Ellijay – volunteers needed!
October 27	Hike in a Georgia Mountain Treasures Area
November 17	Hike in a Georgia Mountain Treasures Area
December	Fourth Annual Volunteer Banquet

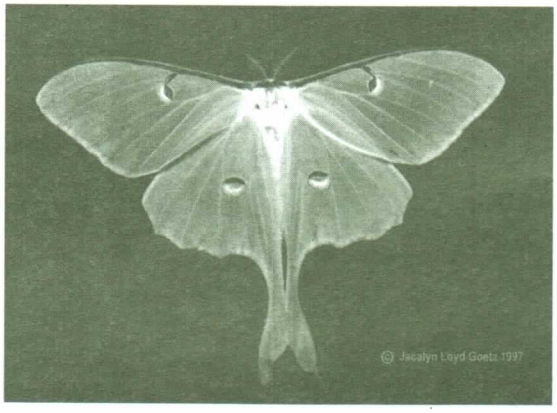
For specifics and to RSVP call Jennifer at 706-635-8733 or register on the web at www.gafw.org.

Of Moths and Men

by Jennifer Rodriguez, GFW Office Manager

"The major ecological concern is that nearly all silk moths are extinct in the northeast. There is a parasitoid fly that was introduced to control gypsy moths that kills about 400 species of other hosts including silk moths" Dr. John Pickering from University of Georgia wrote. What exactly are silk moths I wondered, why are they so important? What types of dangers do they face?

It is amazing how many people that live in North Georgia have sighted the beauty of the Luna moth. I talked to several residents of Fannin and Gilmer county that had enjoyed the visit of a Luna moth to their porch at night while they sat outside or simply suffered from insomnia. The Luna moth shown below is a beautiful creature and a member of the Saturniidae family. It is one of the giant silk moth families. As John Snyder, Professor of Biology at Furman University explained "Giant silk moths do indeed produce a silk sort of material for making their cocoon."



Moth biodiversity is particularly amazing in our region of the world by the foothills of the Southern Appalachians. How biodiverse? One estimate claims "At least 1,000 species, although it would take years to prove it by collecting and observing." It seems there has not been sufficient studies to provide conclusive numbers of moth populations. However the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center lists the following as sighted in Gilmer County, GA.

- Io moth
- Regal moth
- Tuliptree silkmoth
- Luna silk moth

Some interesting facts about the Io Moth, for example: Dr. Pickering explained, " [it] has a neat defense – flashing its underwings hidden cat-like eye spots to frighten away birds and other possible predators when disturbed."

Dangers to the majestic moths can include the following: birds, pesticides, the parasitoid fly mentioned above, and the occasional "curious school kids", as John Snyder mentions. These parasitoids that affect moths are not only flies but wasps also, that "literally eat the caterpillar from the inside." One article describes, "As a Wooly Bear [name of caterpillar that becomes the Tiger Moth] was eating its lunch of poison hemlock, a monstrous thing happened. A huge, hideous maggot squirmed out of Wooly Bear's body, and then turned into a fly." These parasitoids can be, as described, very dangerous to the moth population and has already decreased species populations in the northeast as mentioned above.

Other concerns are direct effects of people. For example, Jacalyn Goetz, (photographed Luna Moth) wrote to me about some of the concerns that Alan Branhagen, Director of Horticulture at Powell Gardens, Missouri says, "Lunas are affected by urban sprawl in that they are attracted to our lights, remaining there after the sun comes up which leaves them vulnerable to birds catching a quick and easy meal. Also, the Lunas that fall to the ground with the autumn leaves (they hibernate on the ground in a papery cocoon within the leaf litter) are often raked up and destroyed or disposed of," he said.

An interesting fact several experts reported is that the Luna moth does not eat. It does all its eating as a caterpillar and when it reaches adulthood and becomes a moth, it doesn't even have a mouth. It lives approximately 1 to 2 weeks, long enough to mate and lay eggs, and then it dies.

Also Jacalyn goes on to explain how the male finds the female. "The antennae of the male is feathery looking" which means they can smell better with it, and they do their smelling with the antennae. "The female emits a pheromone at certain times of the night and he picks up the scent with his antennae..." She mentions the male may travel several miles to find his mate.

Being so spectacular and beautiful the Luna moth and its moth companions bless us with their existence John Snyder poetically exclaims "They enrich our lives by being part of the diversity of nature, and looking quite beautiful."

Dr. James Adams from Dalton State College mentioned to me that there are a few moths endemic to Georgia. He commented on "a little Geometrid moth (Inchworm Moth) called Narraga georgiana (since it occurs in Georgia). It is found, to this date, exclusively in the Ohoopee Dunes area between Macon and Savannah." Is there a complete list of the species that occur in Georgia? Not a "complete" list but a "hypothetical list" exists in Dr. Adams' website http://www.daltonstate.edu/galeps/ and also a few hints on how to identify any lepidoptera that you may encounter. Some hints he mentions are:

- *observe how it holds its wings*
- *the shape of the wings*
- *its estimated size*
- *how hairy is its body*
- *if its active during the day or night.*

And a lot more, so you can identify any moths you see in your area by following these relatively simple guidelines.

News from the Edge – Toccoa District Update

by Tom Thrasher, GFW Toccoa District Leader

There was nothing for it but to cower down off below the Old Rich Mountain Road and wait, caught as we were in a drenching lightening storm along the high ridge running east of Rich Mountain. It had blown in quick and dark as we made our way back from a side trip down the Ramp Gap trail, gathering energy as it came, sweeping our dismay away before its flashing cannon cracks, leaving prickling fear and, finally, a steadied fatalism inside our soaked, cringing hides. Michelle Smith, Allan Wadsworth, his son Mike and I, crouching, waiting, heads humbly bowed.

"Crouching in those sodden leaves like any other forest creature, almost mindless but moment-full, I did what other creatures never could"

Crouching in those sodden leaves like any other forest creature, almost mindless but moment-full, I did what other creatures never could – fumbled deep in my pack for a crumbling old piece of cigar and emergency matches, drew deeper into my flimsy poncho and fired up some heaven-bound smoke. It was something to do, and puffs were alternated with the thought: Ah, so this is being a forest activist! The smoky mantric moment was broken by Allan suggesting that we move on, a reasonable idea since the worst of it was no longer sitting on our heads and one spot was probably as good as another.

So we straightened up and climbed the few steps back to the Old Road. That was now a red, rushing, torrent of a stream moving what seemed a ton of red clay sediment down its course, flushing scrambling salamanders and budging rocks, cutting deeper before our eyes as we sloshed, rock-hopped and picked our way grimly along it. The lightning lessened a little, but the rain kept coming, and that sluice of a road just rolled along hard and down, erupting at intervals through its high lip on the down-slope side, discharging itself with fire hose force to send its unwelcome red load to the forest below. To what springs, to what branches. And this is our wilderness.

We'd left for a day-long hike on the Old Road, beginning to end, from the quarry side toward Stanley Creek, with no idea of rain. And the notion of turning back was never mentioned, not once. For what a gift! electric and startling, maddening, galling, to see and feel firsthand what that road is doing up on that ridge and along those slopes whenever a good rain comes. Stream-choking red loads from a nasty growing gash. So that some men won't have to walk a couple hours to get to a hunting spot, or haul their take out on foot, in time-honored fashion. So caravans of four-wheel-drives can take "challenging", destructive, careless jaunts along the edge of and through a protected wilderness. So that some public officials don't have to take a stand and close that road, a decision that would provoke a rancorous clamor from the loud but relatively few who do so much of the harm.

The final gift of that day, though, was to just be, amongst those mountains, in that forest, in the wake of the storm; to feel the boughs breathing their dripping breath, see the living swirls of mist rise up from ancient creases, hear the songful chatter of birds commence in the high canopy as distant thunder faded yet away. To catch a moment of again being a child in the woods, of the woods. Sweet and fine, pure and simple. Young and so old. That is something to protect, to fight for.

And that is what is at least in my heart and mind, and ours I think, when the call for activists goes out, for help. To look for and map mature stands, to monitor stream health, staff booths, attend meetings, write letters, report ORV trails, monitor Forest Service projects – the list goes on. So that when you find that remnant stand of seven-foot-girth oaks on a ridge, fight your way through a clear-cut tangle, stand in a high-elevation stream full of sediment, it is real clear and fresh what you're working for. And that takes getting out there. Making it family.

Duke Power to impact air quality in Cohutta Wilderness

by Robert Ukeiley, GA Center for Law in the Public Interest

Electric generating power plants are a major cause, if not the major cause of many of our air pollution problems today. They are one of the principle villains behind the smog in the Metro Atlanta area and the haze in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Currently, most of our electricity is generated from coal fired and nuclear plants, with a smaller percentage coming from large scale hydro projects. However, based on public pressure, the mix of ways that we get our energy is changing. Currently, Georgia has 32 applications pending to build new power plants. Almost all of these are natural gas fired plants.

Duke Energy, a multi-billion dollar company, headquartered in Houston, Texas, is currently building a large natural gas fired electric generating plant in Murray County on the Conasauga River. Georgia ForestWatch, along with other groups, has appealed the air pollution permit the State of Georgia issued to Duke. We are seeking to have the pollution limits on the facility tightened, so that Duke does not further exacerbate the smog and haze problems throughout our air shed and beyond. (Robert Ukeiley, of the Georgia Center for Law in the Public Interest, is our lawyer in the case. The case is set for trial in the Office of State Administrative Hearings on July 24, 2001).

Grassroots Lobby Week in Washington D.C.

by Randall White, GFW Board President

The American Lands Alliance organized the annual lobbying effort for activists from around the country during the week of 3-8 June, 2001. About fifty people attended. I was the only activist from the deep South, so quite a few Congressional and Senate offices had no visit, but the important members from Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia were covered. The timing of the visits, in early June, is important for influencing the appropriations process. The fiscal year 2002 budget request, like all those before it, includes a whopping outlay, $1.56 billion, for the direct and indirect costs of timber sale planning, road building and "reforestation." This is 40% of the budget. To put this in perspective, the request for watershed, wildlife and recreation programs total a meager eleven per cent of the budget request.

Our goal was to educate members of Congress about the huge subsidy of taxpayers' money to private logging interests that this budget represents. Many conservatives don't really understand this; they vote the way the leadership instructs them, and the Western Republicans dominate the debate. Lyndy Worsham, Southeast organizer with American Lands, and I had the opportunity to meet with Rep. Johnny Isakson (R-GA; he owns property in Rabun county near the Chattahoochee NF). As we explained this fiscal issue to him, he remarked, "I hear from the people who want everything in wilderness, and the ones who don't want any wilderness, but no one's ever asked me this before." Furthermore, he was shocked and, frankly, incredulous to learn that our national forests have over 400,000 miles of existing roads in them, eight more times than the U.S. interstate highway system, most of which needs maintenance (which the USFS never adequately addresses in its budget requests).

We asked that senators and representatives support any amendments to the appropriations bill to cut money from the timber budget and shift it to other beneficial programs. We also asked them to support any amendments that might be offered to prevent the USFS from spending money to build roads or cut trees in roadless areas as defined by the Clinton roadless rule. As you may know, the Bush administration has undermined this rule, and the new USFS chief, Dale Bosworth, has announced that some timber sales in roadless areas may be authorized by him while the legal challenges to the rule are settled.

ACTION: If you are a constituent of Rep. Isakson (sixth district), please write or call him ASAP and urge that he support these amendments (132 Cannon Bldg, Washington, DC 20515; 202 225 4501). He needs to know that this matters to YOU. Also, call or write Sens. Cleland and Miller with the same message. Sen. Cleland is on our side but encouragement and thanks are always appropriate. Sen. Miller remains undecided about these issues, and we need to keep the pressure up.

U.S. Timber Program Posts Record Losses

Waste in the federal timber sale program is at an all time high, even as logging levels have hit a record low, according to a new report by Taxpayers for Common Sense, a national budget watchdog group. The report found that the federal timber program cost taxpayers $407 million dollars more that it received for its timber sales in 1998.

Using most recent government data and agency figures obtained through Freedom of Information requests, the report found that the US Forest Service is significantly underestimating the timber program's financial losses.

"This agency has become the perennial financial black hole here in Washington," said Jonathan Oppenheimer, director of the Forest Campaign at Taxpayers for Common Sense. "The less they do, the more they waste. This financial abuse is starting to spiral out of control."

Earlier this year, the Forest Service underreported its financial losses by more than two thirds. $779 taxpayer dollars were wasted on every acre logged and $7,730 was lost on every job created. The national forest that does the most restoration and cuts the fewest old growth trees made the most money in 1998: the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon, which made $11.5 million dollars. The forest with the most old growth logging lost the most money: Oregon's Willamette National Forest, which lost almost $30 million dollars.

The timber program lost $407 million in 1998, making it the worst financial year ever for the program. The new figures represent a 23 percent jump from the program's $330 million average loss from 1992 – 1997, which the General Accounting Office had previously reported.

The Forest Service's timber sale program loses money because revenue from timber sales does not cover the costs of sale preparation, administration, road building and other overhead costs. The Forest Service also siphons millions of dollars each year into timber trust funds, which do not receive adequate oversight by Congress or American taxpayers, charges Taxpayers for Common Sense.

(Adapted from a press release from Jonathan Oppenheimer, Director of the Forest Campaign at Taxpayers for Common Sense. The entire report is available on line at http://www.taxpayer.net)

Challenge Grant Update

Thanks to the following members and Foundations (as of press time), GFW has reached $23,560.00 of the matching grant money from our Georgia donor who wishes to remain anonymous.

John G. Allerdice
Kenneth Baer
Roger Bennett
James Bloom
Betty Ann Boggs
Dan Bowden
Leonard Boymer
Carol Brady
Charles Brewer
William Brake
Kay Breyer
James Brown
Elaine Brown
Suzanne Burke
Alvin Burrell
Elmer Butler
Holly Campbell
Jean Caputa
Rodman Chamberlain
Philip Cheek
David and Pam Clough
Mark Collins
Roberta Cook
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Barbara Decker
Margaret Drummond
Jack Edgens
Dagmar Epsten
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Mildred Thrasher
Jerome&Melissa Walker
Randall White
Paul Whittermore
John & Linda Williams
Randolph Willingham
Robert Windom
Ken Zeigliff

Foundations
EMSA Fund
Montgomery Foundation

We will keep you posted on our progress!

"You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay."
—John Bunyan

GFW to Perform ORV Impact study on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests

GFW has received a grant from the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition to conduct and ORV impact study on the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forests over the next three months. If you have documented user conflicts, or would like to help out, give us a call. The survey will identify incursions into wilderness areas, hiking trails, and sensitive areas, as well as compile user conflicts and incidents. The report will be used to counter bad legislation and bolster environmental protection for the forests.

Angela Martin & others examine a musk turtle in the Conasauga River.

GEORGIA FORESTWATCH MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	Individual	Joint
Regular	$20	$30
Student	$10	$15
Generous	$50	$75
Extra Generous	$100	$150
Gilded	$200	$300
Life	$350	$500

All are tax deductible

Please make checks payable to
Georgia ForestWatch
4 River Street
Suite C
Ellijay, GA 30540
or come by the office.

☐ Please check here if you're interested in volunteering at events and festivals.