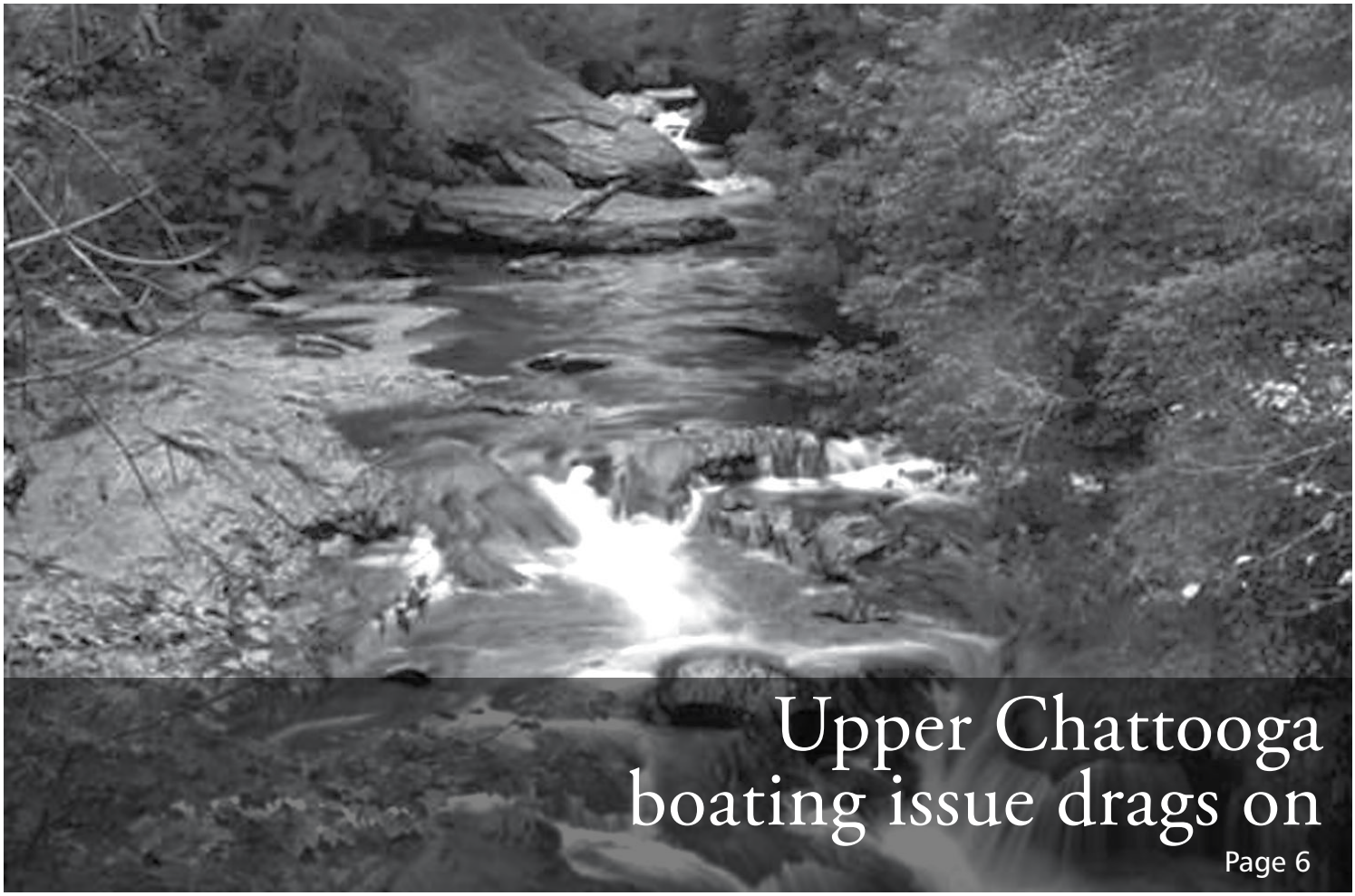
Forest News

Georgia ForestWatch Quarterly Newsletter Fall 2011



Upper Chattooga boating issue drags on

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From the Director

Growing the conservation movement, one child at a time

Wayne Jenkins
Executive Director

The conservation movement has identified a new enemy, or rather a challenge to the future protection of our environment. Journalist Richard Louv (see our book review "Last Child in the Woods," Forest News, Summer 2010 issue) was one of the first to identify and articulate well what so many parents, teachers, conservation leaders and others had been feeling - that our children where spending a disproportionate amount of time engaged in the wrong activities. Television, computers, iPods, cell phones - a whole new array of stimulating and engaging electronic digital devices have captured our children's attention. Access to nature is another challenge, with most children growing up in urban or suburban environments where streams are ditched or piped, forests are razed, air quality often compromised and issues of safety weigh heavy on parents' minds. Add to this the recent development the many after school programs and private classes available for children's enrichment and energetic pursuit, and its easy to see how little time is left for "free time" or unstructured play in nature for our kids.

The dangers of this seem obvious. Time spent in nature is something most of us think of as a birthright, a natural part of childhood, something so ingrained in our lives it's hard to consider growing up without it. Many of today's youth are missing out on the mud squishing through the toes, frog catching, tree climbing - hours-lost-in-a-green-world experience that shaped many of us and our ideas about nature and the world. Before we understood the details about human impacts or ecological interactions, nature had us, captured our imaginations along with our young bodies, provided a safe place to be in our imaginations and in the world, beyond our families, home and school.

What does it mean for millions of kids growing up in a "virtual" world, rather than spending appreciable time in nature? What are the long-term implications for society, for a future conservation movement?

I would like to address the last question directly. Frankly, I do not believe that in the future we will have much in the way of conservation without a reversal of this trend. The threats and increasing demands on our ecosystems already indicate that we are losing ground, and experiencing diminishing functionality and quality of natural systems. If nature-love connectivity is broken - if we do not have millions of young folks with real life experiences in healthy, beautiful natural environments – then I doubt we can have a strong conservation movement in the coming decades, perhaps when we need it most. Ask yourself what the core genesis of your personal love for the environment is, where it originated -- most likely hiding up a tree, splashing in a creek, skimming stones and swimming at the beach.

So, what do we do? One thing you can do is make a special effort to bring a young person or two along on a ForestWatch outing. Your kids, your neighbor's kids, grand kids are all welcome and likely would enjoy our trips afield. We already know, from snorkeling in the Conasauga and hikes to the big trees at Mill Creek, the wonder and fascination of the special places on our national forests. Let's do all we can to get these future shapers of our world out into the best parts of these mountains and forests.

In memory

Maureen and Brooks Keating

Maureen "Mo" Keating, Georgia ForestWatch member and avid hiker, was a kind soul with a sweet heart for her family, friends and neighbors. Unfortunately, she died after that heart gave way the last Sunday in August at the beginning of a hike she'd done many times before, from Pinnacle Knob to Martin Creek Falls, via the Bartram Trail. The sudden arrest confounded her fellow hikers' and doctors' attempts at resuscitation after she was airlifted to the Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville.

The loss leaves her many friends bereft.

"Mo" had in recent years moved permanently to the mountains from Atlanta with her semi-retired lawyer husband (and Northside High School sweetheart), Brooks Franklin, quickly making herself a beloved addition to Rabun County's local scene. She loved to hike the mountains of north Georgia, often taking off on leisurely strolls to mountaintops and waterfalls. She was a mainstay of two tailgate markets in Rabun, serving up the beautiful flowers and delectable vegetables that she and Brooks grew on their expanding sustainable farm. A super cook, "Mo" specialized in hors d'oeuvres and tomato pies. Stepmother to three adult Franklin children, she somehow also found time to simultaneously run a small accounting service, volunteer as a driver for the local Meals on Wheels program, and stay in shape with yoga and belly-dancing classes.

Those many intersecting areas of interest intertwined at a moving service on Labor Day, when over 200 family members and friends gathered at a mountain retreat to honor her memory with music, poetry, song and a huge potluck dinner.

"What I will remember about Mo is her pure goodness and her kind soul," said Honor Woodard, a good friend and Georgia ForestWatch board member. "She will be missed by everyone who knew her."

Georgia ForestWatch extends heartfelt condolences to the Franklin and Keating families. ■

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Cover photo: Upper Chattooga Bull Pen Ledge.
Photo credit: Peter McIntosh

It's an honor

by Robin Hitner : President, Georgia ForestWatch

It is indeed an honor that I serve Georgia ForestWatch as your new President of the Board. As I reminisce about the first time I heard of Georgia ForestWatch and eventually volunteering as a District Leader, little did I know that I would become President one day.

As I begin this transition to assume the Presidency, I am beginning to see all that the job entails. I appreciate all that Ted Doll did for the past two years! Many thanks to you, Ted. For two years Ted planned and chaired meetings, conducted weekly phone calls with the Executive Director, planned events, assisted with writing and editing grants for funding, and chaired the fundraising committee. It was under his watch, that we updated our strategic plan with a new mission and vision statement. When you next see Ted, please thank him for all his hard work. Fortunately, he will remain on the board and continue to serve Georgia ForestWatch.

Many thanks to Ida Long also, who remains on the board but has stepped down as our Treasurer. She continues to work as our accountant. Thank you Ida for your past and continued work. I look forward to working with the Executive Committee members: Kasey Sturm, who continues as Secretary, and our new Treasurer Craig Richardson.

Robin Hitner, Conasauga snorkeling

Robin Hitner tree climbing with Jim Walker.

I also want to thank our excellent staff: Wayne Jenkins, Darren Wolfgang, Diane Freer and Jennifer Lopez. They do much more than most of us are aware of. And then there are "the boots in the woods" – our District Leaders. These are volunteers who give tirelessly of their time, their knowledge, and their passion for our National Forests. And let's not forget our Advisors who keep us grounded with their timely and unique perspectives.

The issues we all face together are becoming increasingly more complex with multiple opinions. Should more lands be declared wilderness? Which chemicals, if any, are safe to use in the woods? (Or if no chemicals, what treatments do we endorse? Fire? Hand-tools? Nothing?) How do multiple recreation groups share the trails and streams? Should special use permits be granted to private groups for large events (hundreds to thousands of people)? Should the U.S. Military be using the forests for training? These are just a few of the issues our staff, district leaders, and board struggle with each day.

It's going to be an exciting couple of years. I thank the Board for their trust in me. I look forward to continuing what Ted has accomplished. Of course, I cannot do this without the generous support of our members. Help us assure the future of our beloved national forests. Please feel free to contact me or our staff if you have any concerns or ideas that would contribute to our mission.

And, see you at the Fall Retreat! ■

Unicoi Turnpike Day in Towns County

The Towns County Historical Society has set Saturday, November 12, 2011 as Unicoi Turnpike Day. "This is a wonderful opportunity for folks to see the longest remnant of the old turnpike in Towns County," said Carey Waldrip, chairman of the Society's Unicoi Turnpike Committee.

Jerry Taylor and Wayne Waldrip surveying the "big cut" on old Unicoi Turnpike in Towns Co.

Meet at Unicoi Gap parking lot near where the Appalachian Trail crosses GA 17/75 (Hiawassee to Helen highway) from 9 AM until Noon for turnpike information and hiking directions.

"[The Society] doesn't provide trail guides to accompany hikers – we can only point you in the right direction," said Waldrip. "Each individual or group is responsible of their own safety and length of travel as they hike along the old turnpike."

This remnant of the old Unicoi Turnpike is located on national forestland and is a rough, sunken road starting at the gap and stretching over two miles north down into Towns County.

"The trek is rather steep and strenuous. You should be healthy and in good shape. Wear hiking clothes and boots. Brightly colored (hot pink or orange) hat and/or vest are recommended for safety since hunting season will be open," Waldrip emphasized.

If you would like to learn the fundamentals of geocaching, meet at the Unicoi Gap parking lot at 9 AM for a one-hour briefing by Dr. Paul Arnold of Young Harris College. Bring a handheld GPS unit if you can (very helpful, but not required).

"After the Geocaching Mini-Workshop, you will still have plenty of time to make the trek down along the nearby remnant of the turnpike," Waldrip said.

Unicoi Turnpike, chartered in 1813, took six years of backbreaking human and mule power to complete. It was the first vehicular route to connect North Georgia with Tennessee through the high mountains, and it provided a thoroughfare from the upper Savannah River to the Little Tennessee near present day Maryville. ■

Upper Chattooga boating issue drags on to next Forest Service review phase

by Joseph Gatins : District Leader

As this issue of *Forest News* lands in the mail, the U.S. Forest Service likely is readying to issue what it hopes will be another "final" decision in the long-running controversy over whether or not to permit boating on the 21 miles of the Wild and Scenic Upper Chattooga River.

For more than 35 years, the entire Upper Chattooga has been "zoned" to prohibit any boating at all. But spurred by boaters and boating lobby groups the federal agency in mid-July proposed a limited opening to boaters on some of the wildest and most remote and solitary places in the Southern Appalachians.

To recap: The Forest Service, on behalf of three affected national forests, the Nantahala, Sumter and Chattahoochee, issued a 494-page Environmental Assessment, which proposed to permit boating three months of the year on 16.5 miles of headwaters, from the Green Creek area to Lick Log Creek, split into two seasons, December 1 to January 15 and January 15 to March 1. There would be limits on numbers of boaters per day, or river flows.

Georgia ForestWatch made common cause with the Missoula, Montana-based Wilderness Watch organization to urge that the current prohibition continue indefinitely. But both groups agreed with the Forest Service that steps need be taken to restore the corridor, which bisects the sensitive Chattooga Cliffs area, the Ellicott Rock Wilderness and the Rock Gorge backcountry, to a more desirable and pristine state, even if it meant imposing new limits on the hikers, hunters, anglers, campers, birders, picnickers, nature photographers and botanists who currently enjoy the area on foot.

Assuming the Forest Service sticks to its boating stand and still recommends an opening of the headwaters to boating in its "final" decision, ForestWatch and other like-minded organizations will be faced with a choice on whether or not to file an administrative appeal of that proposal, and thereafter, consideration of a federal court case if appeals are denied.

Remember: This is the second go-round on this issue, which originated back in 2005. After years of study and analysis and expenditure of countless millions of taxpayer dollars, the Forest Service issued a boating proposal in 2008, which was appealed by five groups, ForestWatch included. The agency then withdrew the proposal entirely and started the environmental review process all over again – which is where we stand today.

There is still no consensus or anything like an agreement on this issue.

American Whitewater and like-minded paddler organizations contend the Upper Chattooga should be open to unlimited numbers of boaters 365 days a year, and any and all flow levels. That lobby organization and several other boater groups also have filed a federal court suit in Greenville, South Carolina, to try to circumvent the Forest Service process and get a judge to order opening of the river. At last filing, that case is still alive, but lawyers for the Forest Service have asked the matter be stayed until the administrative environmental process is completed. Georgia ForestWatch also has entered that separate legal fray, in a motion to intervene in the case so as to try to protect the interests of both the Upper Chattooga resources and those of non-boaters.

ForestWatch and Wilderness Watch want current boating prohibitions to remain in force, a stand echoed in the latest round comments by several other groups, including the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club, the South Carolina Sierra Club, Friends of Georgia, the Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance, the Highlands Biological Station and Highlands Biological Foundation.

Some other groups urged splitting the boater baby in half, pushing the agency to continue boating prohibition on some portions of the river, but opening it on others.

Several area Trout Unlimited chapters, meanwhile – but not all – said they could live with the latest Forest Service proposal (largely, it seems, because the Agency studiously kept the boat out of the prize delayed-harvest trout fishery area between Route 28 and Reed Creek, the Nicholson Field Reach). But one TU group, based in Greenville, S.C. opposed the possible boating opening, as did an organization calling itself North Georgia Trout Online.

Intriguingly, several present and former Forest Service staffers, including retired Chattooga River District Ranger David W. Jensen, penned letters as private citizens that questioned the boating proposals.

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The good, the bad and the ugly:

2011 Hemlock Wooly Adelgid Update from the University of Georgia

by Mark Dalusky : Project Director

Greetings fellow hemlock enthusiasts and forest stewards! This is the University of Georgia's sixth year in the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid bio-control project, and the State has seen a devastating blow to our hemlock resource in the interim. Fully 90 percent of the hemlocks are infested at some level. From Ellijay and Blue Ridge back to the Chattooga River, the hemlocks are in severe decline with significant mortality in the 20 to 80 percent range. One of my favorite hikes on the Three Forks trail is a sad mixture of dead and dying hemlocks. Several nice stands South of Highway 52 near Fort Mountain State Park as well as the Park itself remain in good shape, but from Lake Conasauga North to the confluence of the Jacks and Conasauga River, the infestation is spreading rapidly.

The last two years saw great growing conditions for hemlocks in North Georgia, and the trees responded with abundant recovery growth both in 2010 and this year. Encouraged, we revisited a dozen or so of these older hemlock stands which had been through the initial decline phase and were now showing good new growth. Even though the adelgid level in most of these stands was ultra low, much of the recovery growth already had been re-infested during the first generation (Sistens), and by the second generation (Progrediens), the new growth was again densely colonized *(see figure 1)*. These trees will likely not survive the year. There were encouraging signs at six sites within four of the larger Hemlock Conservation Areas that we revisited. Most of the positive results were from areas immediately adjacent to groups of soil-injected hemlock trees. We have observed this phenomenon consistently across the generally infested forest, and it is likely a result of the insecticide treatment radically reducing the number of adelgids in the immediate area, which in turn reduces reinfestation pressure on any particular hemlock there. This might give us an opportunity to go back in with predator beetles adjacent to treated groups of hemlocks and have at least a chance of establishment.

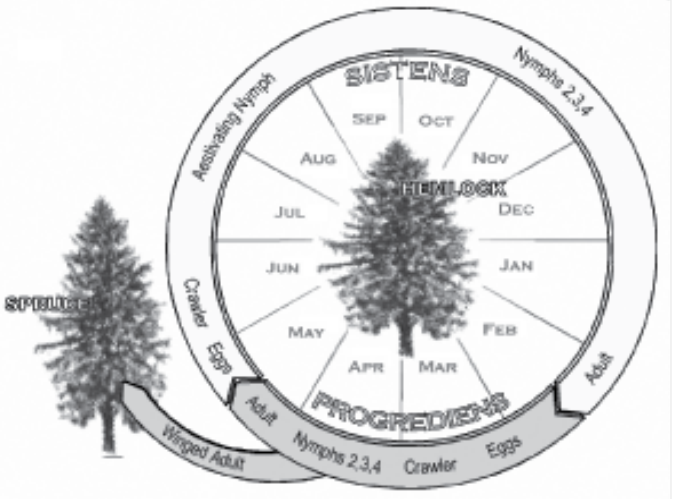

Figure 1.

The Southern Consortium of labs participating in this biocontrol project consists of Clemson University, Young Harris College, the University of Georgia and North Georgia College and State University. Together, we have implemented a coherent, well-considered strategy for releasing three species of predator beetles in areas with infested hemlocks. This strategy consists of characterizing the infestation in any particular area, and only making initial releases of beetles into hemlock stands that will likely provide food and habitat for our predators for at least three years. This means initially working in stands where it is difficult to find adequate adelgid densities on which to release. By year two, typically, adelgids are easy to find, and we make abundant releases. In year three, the hemlock decline symptoms (no new growth, significant loss of needles…. a sad tree to be sure!) are becoming widespread, and we release on whatever decent food (i.e., adelgids) that we can find. Sometimes we get a fourth year to make releases, but that is rare. Our release season runs from the last week in February until mid-June where we end up at the highest elevations (ca. 3200 feet), for our final releases. At this point, adelgid crawlers have migrated to the new growth flush to "settle" for their summer diapauses (period of inactivity). By mid-June this has pretty much happened at all elevations in Georgia.

At this point in time, we have 80 distinct sites on the Chattahoochee National Forest where we have released all three species of predators available for use. These are multi-season, multi-year, multi-phenology (eggs or adults) efforts, which we feel gives the predators the best shot at reproducing in the field,

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Georgia ForestWatch Annual Fall Retreat:

Sustainable Recreation in Your National Forests

Vogel State Park • Saturday, October 1, 2011

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, Wayne Jenkins, Georgia ForestWatch executive director, and George Bain, Supervisor of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, have initiated a collaborative process to address the growing recreational challenges on our national forests. While many bikers, equestrian and motorized users believe they should have more trails, many hikers, hunters, anglers, photographers, picnickers and amateur botanists think they need more solitude.

Jenkins and Bain will address these issues and their collaborative approach in the morning session of our Fall Retreat at Vogel State Park, October 1. They will give us an update on where this process is going.

The retreat has something for everyone! On Saturday, we'll offer fun educational hikes and interesting programs for non-hikers. We will offer tree-climbing fun for the kids during the morning session and for the adults that afternoon. We are pleased to have Genevieve Summers and Jim Walker leading this fun event. Also, we will be raffling off some great prizes this year.

On Saturday, along with our presentations, we will have plenty of time to enjoy the scenery and socialize with new and old friends as we enjoy great food, including a chili lunch and a full barbecue dinner. David Govus and Andy Edwards, as last year, are in charge of these ample and filling meals. Music around the campfire will round out the evening, so bring your instruments and join in.

Retreat tickets are just $20 per person or $30 for a couple. Kids under 12 are free. Price of admission includes lunch, refreshments, BBQ dinner, and all activities. We are limited to 75 persons because of the shelter size at Vogel – so don't miss out! Sign up now and reserve a campsite or cabin! Limited weekend camping/cabin accommodations are available at additional costs. There is an additional $5 parking fee for the park.

For more information and reservations, or to help as a volunteer, call Diane Freer at 706-635-8733 or email us at info@gafw.org. Note: Pets are not allowed at the center. Consider bringing your own extra chairs.

Upper Chattooga boating issue

(continued from page 6)

Jensen, in particular, voiced serious concern over the Agency's ability to properly monitor and enforce the boating proposals, and suggested that perhaps Congress, rather than the Forest Service, had ultimate responsibility to change the river's "zoning." He also predicted that self-registration of boaters on the Upper Chattooga, as proposed by the Agency, would lead to "under-reporting of use from day one."

Added Jensen: "Under the issue of LWD [Large Woody Debris] removal … the EA states, 'The removal of large woody debris … when it poses a threat to private property or FS infrastructures.' The concern that I have relates to the definition of private property. If an individual was kayaking on the Upper Chattooga and came to LWD that would cause damage or 'pose a threat to his private property,' could they remove the LWD that was a hazard to his private property – AKA kayak. Please clarify this rather than allow the courts to decide.'

All comments are public and can be reviewed in detail at this web link under the rubric, "September 6, 2011. Public Comments on the July 2011 EA:"

http://www.fs.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsinternet/!ut/p/c4/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gDfxMDT8MwRydLA1cj72DTUE8TAwjQL8h2VAQAMtzFUw!!/?ss=110812&navtype=BROWSEBYSUBJECT&cid=stelprdb5253595&navid=091000000000000&pnavid=null&position=Featur

The comments include at least a half-dozen letters from individual Georgia ForestWatch members, including one from Butch Clay of Mountain Rest, South Carolina, a long-time protector of this river and an advisor to the ForestWatch board of directors.

Said Clay: "My comments here will be very brief as I simply do not have any more time to devote to an "environmental assessment" which reveals itself as much as does this one to be the product of a flawed, biased attempt

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The good, the bad and the ugly

(continued from page 7)

establishing and spreading to new areas. For the third year in a row, we have recovered predators from about 75 percent of the areas sampled, thanks in large part to the efforts of Cera Jones, a graduate student here at UGA and Director of the predator beetle lab at North Georgia College. I can also say that almost all (90+ percent) of our predator release areas have very little mortality even though the hemlocks don't look great. Compare this to the numbers I cited earlier, and it appears that a treatment effect may be in evidence. This is a very hard thing to document, so bear with us! Live trees at these areas after another three years would give us something to hang our hats on. The missing link for us here at the southern end of the hemlock's range may well be the absence of a specific predator to feed on the second (Progrediens) generation of the adelgid, as our primary predator *(Laricobius nigrinus)* is pretty much done for the year by early May. You see, Laricobius is so well tuned into its adelgid prey that it too undergoes a summer diapause, and wakes up in early to mid-October at about the same time as the adelgids. There is a tenacious little lady beetle from the Seattle/Tacoma area (same origin as our Laricobius) that we have been studying and that shows great potential to be our missing Progrediens predator. Currently we are urgently working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to get a permit for release in Georgia. We and some prominent experts in biocontrol see no downside to releasing this beetle, yet still we are encountering frustrating resistance from the Health Inspection Service. I'll keep you posted!

Finally, there is a perfect storm of adelgids brewing in our hemlock stands right now due to the last 2 years of nice new growth and our unusually warm weather. New growth from last year was abundant so it did not become fully occupied by the crawlers settling in for their summer diapause (2010). This resulted in the first adelgid generation in 2011 having great conditions for feeding and reproduction. Boy did they ever reproduce! The second generation this year was massive! The new growth flush at most elevations this year were several weeks early due to the winter warm-up and our apparent jump right into summer temperatures. Normally, the eggs from the second generation of adelgids hatch and produce crawlers well before shoot elongation has progressed fully. That simple fact results in much crowding and intra-specific competition amongst the crawlers that settle in for diapause. There is just no room at the inn. Significant mortality occurs. Not this year I'm afraid!

Share your forest experiences with us and we'll share them with your fellow members of Georgia ForestWatch! (See member Charlie Haynes' article on page 11).

- Write up your experience from a ForestWatch outing, or a personal forest outing.
- Send us your forest photographs – mountain views, waterfalls, wildlife etc. (High-resolution, please)
- Tell us how and when you first became involved with Georgia ForestWatch.
- Are you an artist? Send in a copy of your art work.

You don't have to be a professional writer. Articles up to 500 words are best. If needed and with your approval, your submission may be edited.

We all have something to share, so let's get to it! Send your submissions to: jlopez@gafw.org.

There seems to be much more shoot elongation occurring before and during the adelgid egg hatch. These crawlers will find plenty of room to set up housekeeping, and ostensibly summer survival will be much better. I fear we may see a jump in tree mortality by the end of 2011.

Georgia ForestWatch has committed several thousand more dollars to the effort here at the University of Georgia (many thanks to all). The next two to three years will be very critical for conservation of functional hemlock stands in Georgia. Please find it in your heart … or should I say "budget" to donate more dollars to this very worthwhile cause. Contributions are fully tax-deductible, and we have a simple mechanism to receive donations from non-profits like ForestWatch. I'm certain that the Lorax must have alluded to the 'greenback being mightier than the adelgid' at some point in his storied career! Cheers from Athens. ■

Emerald Ash Borer could threaten Georgia's ash trees

by Darren Wolfgang : Forest Ecologist

A relatively new pest, the Emerald Ash Borer *(Agrilus planipennis)*, has been on a steady march (or hitch hiking adventure) over much of the range of our native ash trees. After unsuccessful quarantine measures, it appears that our ash trees will be forced to join the list of native trees being seriously threatened by exotic pests and pathogens. This list already includes the American chestnut, American elm, oak species, American beech, as well as Eastern and Carolina hemlocks any many others.

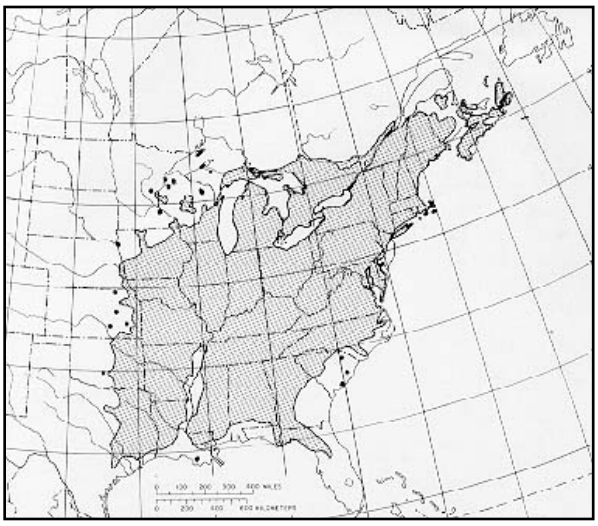
Discovered just 10 years ago in Michigan, this ash borer is thought to have arrived like many of our exotic forest pests – on shipping pallet material from Asia. It has rapidly swept across vast territories from Michigan to Ontario and Quebec, and south to eastern Tennessee. States reporting the presence of the borer include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Canada's Quebec and Ontario provinces. The wake of destruction caused by these tiny insects is rather impressive, with losses of ash trees in the tens of millions in eastern Michigan alone. As is the case with many of our other non-native invasive species in the US, there are no native predators for controlling the borer.

The pest perpetuates itself, as adults lay eggs in bark crevices. Emerging larvae then bore into the trees creating winding galleries under the bark as they feed on the cambium (live tissue of the tree under the bark), thereby diminishing the trees' ability to transport water and nutrients vertically and horizontally throughout its height. This ultimately causes death within two years. All native ash trees are susceptible to the borer, with green ash being preferred.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), attempted to quarantine and eradicate the borer, but failed due to the rapid spread and enormous infected range. The main mechanism for the rapid spread of the borer has been the movement of firewood and to a lesser extent other wood products. Most states testing positive for the borer have enacted firewood and ash tree transportation and distribution bans within 50-mile radii of sourcing zones in an attempt to curb further spread.

What does this mean for Georgia?

Georgia has a handful of ash species including: American ash *(Fraxinus Americana)*, Green ash *(Fraxinus pennsylvanica)*, and Pumpkin ash *(Fraxinus profunda)*. With the borer introduction to neighboring East Tennessee, it is possible that a few could make it to Georgia. Fortunately for Georgia, white and green ash typically occur scattered or in clusters of individuals in forest stands in the northern part of the state, as opposed to stands being largely dominated by ash. This scattered distribution of ash trees in the state could also assist in limiting any potential future spread of the borer if it arrives. Neighboring states that have more extensive ash populations would suffer more rapid dispersion and more severe forest damage due to abundant ash trees (food) for new populations of borers. Nevertheless, the native range of ash extends into the middle of our state and there are known populations in east and central north Georgia, so it is important, from an ecological conservation perspective, to try to maintain as many of Georgia's native species as possible. Perhaps one of the greatest risks to Georgia's ash trees could be those planted in urban and suburban areas as ornamental landscape and shade trees. Homeowners with ash trees in their forests or yards should stay tuned to the spread of this pest.



Map source: USDA-Forest Service Silvics of North America

Range of White ash *(Fraxinus americana)*

Hope for the future?

Pesticides: Outside of the quarantine provisions enacted by federal, state, and local governments, landowners have few

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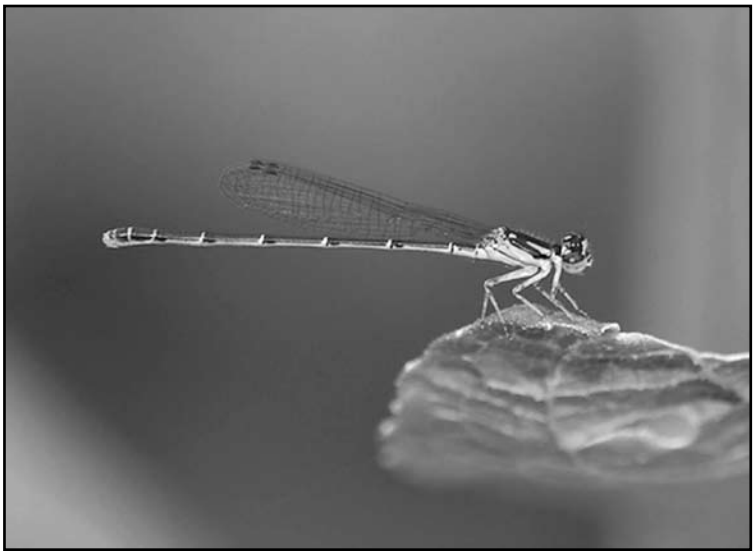
Dragonflies & Damselflies hike

by Charlie Haynes : Georgia ForestWatch member

I never cease to be amazed at what goes on in the grass. When I was a kid my father told me to never come to him and say I was bored. He said that with a magnifying glass I should be able to learn and entertain myself for hours on end… and he gave me a magnifying glass. I still have it, like a talisman. I worked for years at universities, commercial businesses and as a self-employed photographer and graphic designer, weaving in nature study when time allowed. Some years, there was little time to "go out," so my nature "walks" entailed settling in my backyard or anyone's backyard. There's always stuff to see. It's fun to keep a little list of the things that pop up when you're just taking the garbage out or watering the plants.



Now, a bit retired, my wife and I are able to go on trips under the auspices of Georgia ForestWatch and of our own making.

After all, Georgia is an amazing state for nature lovers, from the mountains to the sea. It's not difficult to make up a trip to any of the state parks, wildlife preserves or national wildlife areas and it always gives us something to look forward to.

Recently we went to the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, at Johnson Ferry Road for a walk with Giff Beaton, author of *The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Georgia and the Southeast*, sponsored by Georgia ForestWatch, specifically to see, learn about and identify Odonates; Dragonflies and Damselflies. A trip with Giff is like no other. I always come home fired up to learn more. We had a lack of sun and the

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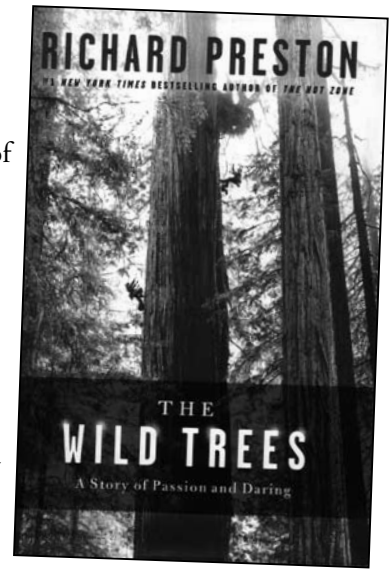
Book review:
The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring

by Jim Walker : District Leader

The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring, by Richard Preston, Random House Press, New York, 2007, 294 pages

The most impressive sights I have ever seen are the redwood forests. Unlike our eastern forests, which have been so thoroughly cut as to obliterate even the memory of what they were a few centuries ago, the remaining redwood forests, which still cover very large areas, have stood essentially unchanged for many thousands of years.



It is almost impossible to take a good picture of a big redwood, one that conveys even a small portion of its immensity and grandeur. It is equally difficult, if not more so, to adequately describe such a tree. Even standing at the base of a big redwood, which may be over 350 feet tall, it is usually impossible to see the top. Only the massive trunk and its lower branches are visible from below. The only way to really get to know the whole tree is to climb to the top.

That is what a foolhardy, death-defying kid named Steve Sillett decided to do on the spur of the moment one fall day in 1987. Sillett is one of the main characters of Richard Preston's nonfiction narrative *The Wild Trees*. The story of his first climb of a 300-ft redwood, without the benefit of a rope, is legendary. By legendary, I do not mean to imply that Preston's masterful telling of it is in any way factually untrue or even embellished, only that the story is a fantastic, incredible one, well-known to all redwood researchers and serious tree climbers.

Sillett later learned to climb trees more safely, with ropes, and is now the preeminent scientist studying the redwood canopy. Much of *The Wild Trees* is devoted to describing the amazing, diverse ecosystem he found there.

The other main character of the book is Michael Taylor, who does not climb redwoods, but spends most of his time bushwhacking through nearly impenetrable vegetation, blocked by huge fallen trunks, on extremely challenging terrain, looking for the world's tallest tree. When he finds it, he keeps looking, because he knows there must be a bigger one somewhere.

Sillett and Taylor eventually found each other and were the two participants in the "Day of Discovery," May 11, 1998, when they discovered a whole grove of the world's biggest redwood trees, which they named the Grove of Titans, "at the bottom of a hidden, notch-like valley deep in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park."

Here Preston's account is not completely truthful. First, he says that the grove "was previously undiscovered." This is true only if "discovered" means "reported and publicized." It is certain that many people had seen the Grove of the Titans before the Day of Discovery. Second, Preston claims, "The exact location of the grove is known only to a handful of biologists, who climb the trees and study the ecology of the grove. They guard the knowledge of its location with the jealousy of a prospector who has found a mother lode."

The first sentence is untrue. I know where the Grove of the Titans is and have seen it myself, as have many others. And despite the jealous guarding of its location, you too can find it. All you need is a map of Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park and the clues to be found in The Wild Trees.

On the Day of Discovery, Sillett and Taylor parked somewhere along Route 199, which runs through the northern part of the park. Then came: "an hour and a half of clawing up the stream … two hours to cover a mile and a half … two hours later … getting on toward noon … some two hours later … they had been going for seven hours … on and on,

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One of the afternoon activities offered at the Georgia ForestWatch Retreat on October 1, 2011 will be a vertical hike with Genevieve Summers of Dancing With Trees in a big hickory across the parking lot from the pavilion where the retreat is held. There will also be a morning tree climbing session for kids. Don't miss the thrill of viewing your surroundings from high atop a tree!

Book review

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for three hours … an hour later … the sun began to set." When they finally made their discovery, "The stars were beginning to come out, and Venus was up." And yet, "At nine o'clock at night on the Day of Discovery, they were stuffing themselves on cheeseburgers at a Carl's Jr. in Crescent City." Use these clues and look at the map to learn the location of the Grove the Titans.

The Wild Trees is a book that changed my life. When I read it, I decided that I wanted to learn to climb trees. I did not have far to go, since Peter Jenkins, the father of recreational tree climbing and founder of Tree Climbers International, teaches tree climbing in Atlanta. I have been getting high up in trees for over three years now. It is thrilling, but not nearly as dangerous as Preston would have you believe. Last year I accomplished my goal of standing at the top of a big redwood (not in the Grove of Titans). I recommend this book to anyone who loves trees. ■

Upper Chattooga boating issue

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to reach a political solution to an issue which so clearly demands the fullest, fairest, most unstinting and far-sighted ecological treatment possible.

"Until a full EIS [Environmental Impact Statement] may be conducted, which treats the entire river, I do not support any alternative or plan that would allow boating in the headwater reaches, or that would allow any intensified "opening up" of the headwaters backcountry areas other than by foot travel only access," Clay said.

Here are other pertinent points brought out by like-minded members of the public and organizations:

- Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance: "As a categorical statement, we believe that allowing boating at all on the Upper Chattooga is a non-sustainable decision. All that you'll get is a few years, if that, of some happy boaters, and a degraded resource that even now actually is in need of serious stewardship to preserve what is can [sic] and should be for all generations which will follow us." by Robert E. Smith, JMCA president.

- Highlands Biological Station & Highlands Biological Foundation: "It makes no sense to me, as a biologist or as a citizen, for the USFS to consider further opening a largely protected stretch of Wild and Scenic River in at 'at risk' watershed region to increased boat and foot traffic, which will only serve to push the Upper Chattooga into the 'Impaired Function' category." By James T. Costa, PhD, executive director, Highlands Biological Station.

- Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club: "I am writing to inform you that the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club is opposed to any Alternative that would open up the Chattooga River's headwaters to boating." By Larry Winslett, Sierra Wildlands Committee.

What next? Stay tuned. This boating issue is still dragging on. ■

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Around the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

(A partial list of new and ongoing U.S. Forest Service projects)

by Darren Wolfgang : Forest Ecologist

Forest-wide:

Mid-story removal: Managers of the Chattahoochee portion of the National Forest have developed and approved a proposal to selectively remove dense mid-story trees in order to increase sunlight to the forest floor and stimulate the growth of desirable species such as oak and hickory. Georgia ForestWatch urged that the Agency pay particular attention to single-species stands that had previously been clear cut.

Watershed assessments: The Chattooga River, Conasauga, and Blue Ridge Ranger Districts are currently conducting watershed level assessments to determine management needs and opportunities within the watersheds, i.e., where the Agency might initiate some new timber sales. Under review are: on the Chattooga River District, the Warwoman Watershed; Sumac Creek watershed on the Conasauga District, and Coopers Creek watershed on the Blue Ridge District. Potential opportunities identified thus far for the three watersheds include: thinning overstocked pine stands to prevent Southern Pine Beetle outbreaks and helping move the forest towards a more natural oak-pine-hickory mix,; hemlock conservation; non-native invasive species removal; relocation or decommissioning of failing roads contributing to stream impairment; prescribed fire; vegetation management for wildlife; and old-growth conservation.

Chattooga River Ranger District:

Upper Chattooga Boater Access: See separate article on p. 6.

New air pollution permit for Multitrade Rabun Gap electricity co-generation plant. The state's Environmental Protection Division has proposed issuance of a new "Title V" air permit for this power plant, which uses wood as its primary fuel. Georgia ForestWatch is reviewing the application.

Road repairs on Abe Gap Road: The federal highway administration proposes to rebuild a severely eroded portion of Abe Gap Road in Rabun County, which essentially has washed into the Coleman River, as part of the same federal project that will allocate federal funds for the reconstruction of the Frady Branch multi-use trail in Stephens County.

Blue Ridge Ranger District:

Blue Ridge Pine Thinning Stewardship Project: The District has proposed to evaluate 6,735 acres of forest for potential forest thinning activities. Only stands with overly dense pine will be targeted for treatment under this proposal. According to the District, proceeds from this project will be used to reduce the impact of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, enhance fisheries, prevent Southern Pine Beetle impacts, and enhance wildlife habitat.

Oconee Ranger District:

Travel Analysis Project: The District has requested public input for a roads and transportation analysis project. The main objective of this integrated ecological, social, and financial approach to transportation planning is to address existing and potential future forest roads needs. The analysis seeks to identify a road system that provides adequate transportation for the public and the agency. The analysis will gather information about road conditions and use, which will allow the agency to make decisions about potential relocation, repair, and decommissioning of various system roads. The area under analysis encompasses approximately 116,000 acres of forestland and approximately 225 miles of Forest Service roads. ■

Rabun Gap Multitrade Plant

Emerald Ash Borer

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options to save their ash trees. One solution, as with the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid, is to consider use of insecticides, which often kill all insects that contact a given tree, beneficial and harmful species alike. Because the borers burrow into the trees, the effectiveness of the pesticides is often limited. It is very difficult to save trees that have already been impacted by the borer and the result is usually to cut down the infected tree as well as all others nearby to prevent reproduction and spread.

Biocontrols: Recently, a predatory, stingless wasp *(Cerceris fumipennis)*, has been discovered in Eastern North America. This wasp is currently being evaluated as a possible bio-surveillance tool. Researchers have discovered that the wasp hunts and captures adult borers and takes them back to the nest to feed on their larvae. It appears however, that the wasp does not eat sufficient quantities to make meaningful reductions in areas with high ash borer densities. While this species may not be able to single handedly control the borer, its detection skills are far superior to that of humans and human technology. Further, using traditional human based ground/visual surveys including sticky traps is costly and labor intensive; this wasp could help to improve the detection process.

Since 2003, American and Chinese researchers have also located three species of parasitic Asian wasps that show some promise for ash borer control in Eastern North America. The theory behind the parasitic wasps is that since they are a natural predator of the borer, they would be able to efficiently locate borer larvae under the tree bark and eat the larvae when they emerge, thus interrupting the life cycle of the borer. In 2007, USDA-APHIS approved the trial release of parasitic wasps and results are pending. Some researchers have pointed out that North American ash trees planted in Asia perish rapidly even where Asian parasitic wasps are present. (Liu H., 2003).

Click here to learn more about the emerald ash borer:
http://www.emeraldashborer.info/

References:

Liu H., Bauer, L.S.(2003) *Exploratory Survey for the Emerald Ash Borer, Agrilus Planipennis (Coleoptera:Buprestidae), and its Natural Enemies in China.* The Great Lakes Entomologist 36: 191-204.

USFS Silvics of North America:
www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/silvics_manual/table_of_contents.htm

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Vicki Miller
De Gina Scoggins
Mary Shuman
Eric & Raine Somerville
Connie Thomas
Don & Dottie Weissman
Hubert Wieland

Dragonflies and Damselflies hike

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dragonflies were reluctant to show themselves but we shifted gears and started in on wildflowers, turtles, birds, spiders, butterflies, and flies.

Beaton explained that dragonflies and damselflies are not able to regulate heat internally on their own and it takes a while for them to "warm up" for flight and hunting. Early in the day, intermittent sun means intermittent sightings and that described our situation the day of the outing. Conversely, if the sun gets too hot, they can be found in the shade under leaves and on the shady side of rocks and trees because they can't tolerate the rise in body temperature direct sunlight brings. They're at work all the time, hunting, laying eggs and staying just out of the reach of photographers.

In every tree, bush and tuft of grass there are lives unfolding, most often without our knowledge and certainly without our help. Anyone can start a study of any part of one and spend the rest of their life never getting it all. I study spiders wherever I am. There is never a shortage of material whether I'm in downtown Atlanta, in the mountains of Italy or in the salt marsh on the Georgia coast.

More than likely, no one reading this needs to be told much about nature, so this is about being a part of something always bigger than ourselves, however small the individual participants. It's a real pleasure to have taken this trip together. ■

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