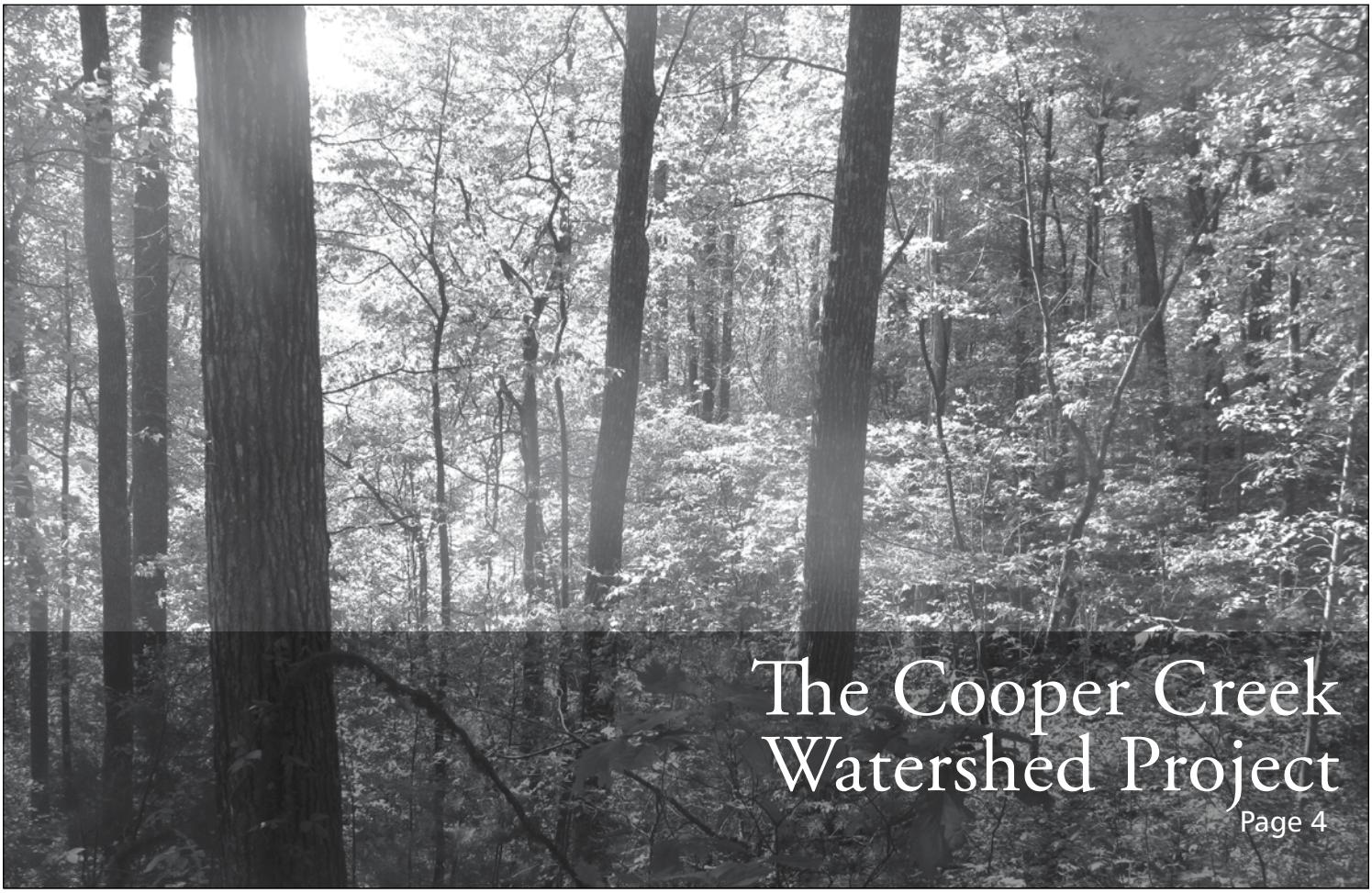
# Forest News

Georgia ForestWatch Quarterly Newsletter Summer 2014



## The Cooper Creek Watershed Project

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# From the Director

## ForestWatch has moved!

*Mary Topa*
*Executive Director*

In case you haven't heard, Georgia ForestWatch moved its office to Dahlonega in April! This change has been a long time coming – it has been discussed off and on for the last 10-15 years, and has been recommended in previous strategic plans.

Why move to Dahlonega? Ellijay is a wonderful small town – it has been good to Georgia ForestWatch and it will be sorely missed by staff. But geographically, the move makes sense - Dahlonega is more centrally located in the Chattahoochee National Forest, and is closer to the Forest Supervisor's office in Gainesville and to the Oconee National Forest. We think this move will facilitate more interactive and open conversations with the Forest Service on projects throughout the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, and particularly in the Oconee National Forest.

Moving to Dahlonega, a dynamic college town, will be a plus for attracting and retaining qualified staff, particularly young professionals. Having a presence in Dahlonega will also encourage closer relationships with the University of North Georgia (UNG) and other institutions such as the University of Georgia in Athens. We feel that this move *forward* will open new doors – new partnerships, new sources of funding, new opportunities to provide internships, and greater interaction with the next generation of ForestWatchers.

We are already exploring options with UNG to integrate student interns and faculty into forest monitoring projects, benefiting ForestWatch, the Forest Service, the students and the University. By working with students and universities, we take an active role in training the next generation of conservation practitioners and instilling the ethos of environmental stewardship. I cannot think of better training experiences than having students work with ForestWatch staff, advisors, Board members, our dedicated District Leaders, and our environmental partners such as the Southern Environmental Law Center.

Dahlonega is an environmentally-friendly town, so Georgia ForestWatch feels right at home. We have joined the Chamber of Commerce, and are very excited about new partnerships and becoming an active member of the Dahlonega community, promoting our environmental mission. In fact, we are already partnering with the Forest Service, multiple conservation partners, trail clubs and the UNG to organize an event at Hancock Park in Dahlonega on September 6th, 2014: "Inspiring Stewardship – A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act" (http://www.wilderness50th.org/events.php?useraction=detail&e_id=570).

Leading up to this main event, we are organizing hikes and volunteer stewardship opportunities in the various Wilderness Areas in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Please check out some of Georgia ForestWatch's upcoming outings and events listed below, with updates posted on our Outings webpage (http://gafw.org/current_out_event.html).

We invite you to stop by and see our new office at 81 Crown Mountain Place, Building C, Suite 200, Dahlonega, GA 30533. Also, please note that our phone number has changed, 706-867-0051.

Mary A. Topa

### UPCOMING EVENTS & OUTINGS

July 12th
Lichens at Brasstown Bald
Malcolm Hodges

July 26th
Snorkel the Conasauga
Laura Stachler

August 9th
Lake Zwerner Night Hike
Laura Stachler

August 23rd
Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

August 27th
Moccasin Creek
Brenda Smith

September 6th
50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act
Celebration Hikes

September 17th
Locust Stake
Ben Cash

September 20th
Lake Winfield Scott to Wolfpen Gap
Tom Colkett

October 4th – 5th
Fall Retreat at Vogel

*We are finalizing the details for more hikes and will post them on our website. To receive alerts and registration information, join our email alert program found on our website at www.gafw.org.*

# Welcome Laura Stachler, our new Outreach Coordinator

Mary Topa and the Georgia ForestWatch Board of Directors would like to welcome Laura Stachler, our new Outreach Coordinator, to the Georgia ForestWatch family.

*Photo credit: Luke Stachler*

*Laura Stachler*

Laura started on May 12th, and she impressed everyone because within the first few hours in the office, she was able to create and send out a hiking alert using Constant Contact. This first day was a good indication of things to come and we are lucky to have her!

Laura is a native Georgian, born and raised in Cartersville. Like many of us, she was always outside as a child, and this experience has had a strong impact on her as a person, and how she treats the earth. Strengthened from this outdoor experience, her passion has fueled her desire to work towards raising awareness about our forests and their watersheds, and the countless ecological services they provide. Laura wants the North Georgia and metro-Atlanta communities to share her passion. She feels very strongly that memberships and volunteerism in organizations like Georgia ForestWatch are ideal ways to help raise environmental awareness, and believes in the positive outcomes that can grow from these organized efforts.

Laura got her Associate of Arts in Spanish from Georgia Highlands College in Cartersville, GA, and then went on to earn her Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science with a concentration in Biology from Berry College in Mount Berry, GA. Laura has completed 800 miles of the Appalachian Trail (Springer Mountain, GA, into Virginia and then Mount Katahdin, ME, south past the 100 Mile Wilderness.)

Laura's environmental career really got going at the Chattahoochee Nature Center in Roswell, GA. Spending her days interpreting the Chattahoochee River watershed and it's native flora and fauna with the Greater Atlanta community opened up many avenues for her. What intrigues her so much about Georgia ForestWatch is how hands-on we are with issues in our forests and watersheds. There is a follow-through here that she is excited to be a part of. Laura is looking forward to seeing issues through from start to finish, and contributing to future successes in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. ■

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Georgia ForestWatch is a 501(c)3
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*Cover photo credit: David Govus*

# Cooper Creek Watershed project

by Jim Walker : District Leader

On May 2, 2014, Georgia ForestWatch and individual District Leaders received a scoping notice from the Blue Ridge Ranger District regarding the Cooper Creek Watershed Project. It was not unexpected, since the Forest Service has been working on plans for this project for more than three years. Georgia ForestWatch staff and volunteers attended a public meeting in 2011 to discuss needs for forest management in the watershed, and later went on a field trip to view the project area with the Forest Service and representatives from other groups and agencies.

But when the scoping notice arrived, we were very surprised by the sheer size of the proposed project, which includes 3,754 acres on 127 stands. Even more worrisome were the ages of the stands listed in the scoping notice: almost half of the stands (59) are over 100 years old, and another 25 are at least 90 years old.

The project is also very complex, proposing seven different types of treatments in the various stands: Oak/Oak-Pine Thinning, Pine/Pine-Oak Thinning, Canopy Gap Thinning, Early Successional Habitat, "Woodland Restoration," Midstory Treatment, and Release. None of these treatments are clearcuts, but all of them except for the last two call for harvesting approximately half of the timber from the stands (or more in the case of Early Successional Habitat). Of the other two, the Midstory Treatment is a preliminary stage in preparation for timber harvest later, and the Release Treatment is intended to remove "trees competing with desirable oaks or other soft and hard mast producing species" in stands that "were harvested by complete overstory removal [clearcut] without ensuring the presence of advanced oak regeneration …." Although more than 200 stands were clearcut in the last 45 years in the immediate vicinity of the project area, the Release Treatment is proposed on only 10 stands.

A few days after receiving the scoping notice, we went out to see some of the project sites for the first time. Altogether, Georgia ForestWatch District Leaders spent a total of 10 days surveying the proposed project, which was not nearly enough time to see even half of the stands. However, Andrew Baker, the Blue Ridge District Ranger, has kindly agreed to let us continue to submit site-specific concerns after the June 6th comment deadline.

*Photo credit: David Govus*

*Some of the oldest oak stands are targeted in this project.*

What we saw was shocking! It seems as if the whole project is based on the idea of finding the very best and oldest timber and cutting it down. The first two stands we looked at are slated for Early Successional Habitat, which translates to cutting down more or less everything except for a small number of required trees left for bat habitat. These stands are on exceedingly rich soil, with an herbaceous layer of black and blue cohosh, bloodroot, and trillium. The trees, mostly oaks, are large diameter and very tall, close to or greater than the age for old growth, and exhibited other old-growth characteristics, according to the Forest Service's definition.

From there it only got worse. In one stand after another, with few exceptions, we saw magnificent forest stands and became more and more outraged at the idea of cutting it all down. Was the clearcutting of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s not enough? When will it end? When there is only one stand of big old trees left on the forest, or none at all?

With the indispensable help of the Southern Environmental Law Center, Georgia ForestWatch has written comments opposing the Cooper Creek Watershed Project and suggesting improvements. The scoping notice for the project can be found on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest's website under Land & Resources Management (http://www.fs.usda.gov/prjoects/conf/landmanagement/projects), Projects: 04-228 Coopers Creek Watershed Project. Georgia ForestWatch's response will be posted on our website.

*(continued on page 5)*

## Welcome New Members!

Amazon Smile Foundation
Stephen Bayliss
Pam Buckmaster
Jana Camerin
Irene Celcer
Becky Hoover
Patrick Hunter
Susan Justicz
Rebecca McSwain
Nathan Mynatt
Todd Preuss
Dan Rawlins
Doris Roberts
Kaleigh Sims
Charlie Smillie
James Solomon
Glenda Sykes
Karen Tantillo
Upper River Adventures
Donna Waddell
Susan White & Newt Newton

Some of our objections are:

- Much of the project (1,794 acres) is in Management Prescription 7.E.1, which according to the Forest Plan is "unsuitable for timber production."
- "Woodland Restoration" is proposed on 764 acres. The Forest Service's efforts to create woodland at Brawley Mountain have not been successful so far, and the agency should not attempt another "woodland restoration" project until it has demonstrated the capability to do so on the smaller and less difficult topography of Brawley Mountain. In addition, the "woodland" part of the project area is in Management Prescription 9.H, which is intended for "restoration of historical plant associations and their ecological dynamics to ecologically appropriate locations." But woodland is not ecologically appropriate on these sites.
- Canopy Gap Thinning is proposed on 466 acres to enhance habitat for cerulean warblers, which have never been seen or heard in the area. And many of the Canopy Gap stands are already creating gaps naturally, as a result of large treefalls.
- Eight of the 10 stands proposed for Early Successional Habitat are totally inappropriate. This type of treatment should be done in much younger, previously clearcut stands.
- Many of the stands we have already seen do not conform to the description of stands for their treatment type. For example, some of the Pine/Pine-Oak Thinning stands, which are supposed to have high-density white pine, have little or no white pine at all.
- Georgia ForestWatch opposes the indiscriminate use of herbicides on over 3,000 acres, particularly when the Brawley Mountain project has demonstrated the failure of foliar herbicide application to control "undesirable" stump sprouts.
- A large portion of the project area is on slopes greater than 40%, which make logging exceedingly difficult.
- The project will require construction of five miles of "temporary" roads, in addition to skid trails and dozens of landings large enough to allow room for tractor-trailers to turn around.
- The proposal fails to take into account climate change, its adverse effects, and the increased likelihood of extreme rain events, the impact of which will be exacerbated by steep slopes and construction of roads and landings.

## ForestWatch Retreat

## October 3rd, 4th and 5th, 2014

Make plans to attend the annual Georgia ForestWatch retreat and membership meeting at Vogel State Park and help us celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. As usual, there will be good people, great information and lots of fun. Cabins and campsites have been reserved for Friday and Saturday nights. Come Friday night for a meet-and-greet and potluck dinner.

We'll spend Saturday celebrating wilderness with a variety of speakers, photography, music, and hikes. Saturday night dinner will be our traditional Barbeque followed by a campfire with singing and stories.

Sunday's program will include a choice of hikes and other activities. See you there!

**SAVE THE DATE!! DON'T MISS IT!**

The Cooper Creek Watershed Project is by far the most objectionable project I have seen in 12 years of forest watching. The only good thing I can say about this project is that it guided me to some of the most magnificent forests I have seen anywhere on the Chattahoochee National Forest. I am glad I have had a chance to see these places while the trees are still standing. Georgia ForestWatch and Southern Environmental Law Center will do the best we can to save some of them for future generations. ■

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# Cooper Creek Project – Process for environmental analysis

by Patrick Hunter and Sarah Francisco : Southern Environmental Law Center

Thankfully, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Forest Service to consider the impacts of, and alternatives to its proposals. The current proposal for the Cooper Creek watershed presents many potential impacts that must be adequately considered, including: erosion and sedimentation; impacts to current or potential old-growth, brook trout, wildlife, rare species, scenic views, and recreation; and the effects of road construction. Moreover, the Forest Service must protect sustainable soil, water, and forest resources, at a minimum, to baseline standards established under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and ensure that projects are consistent with the forest's overall management plan. The agency also must determine whether the project would impact any plants or animals listed under the Endangered Species Act or identified as "sensitive" by the Forest Service and consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding any possible effects on species protected by the Endangered Species Act.

In this first phase of the environmental analysis, the Forest Service defines the scope of the analysis. Working within the framework established by NEPA, the scoping comments that Georgia ForestWatch, the Southern Environmental Law Center and the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club submitted identified environmental impacts and issues that should be considered and should lead to the development of alternatives to avoid or minimize those impacts. First, this helps the Forest Service determine whether it must complete an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as the next step in the process, if it chooses to move forward. An EIS requires a more thorough assessment of a project's impacts and careful consideration of ways to mitigate those impacts. To complete the less-burdensome EA, the Forest Service must show that it can avoid or adequately mitigate the adverse impacts identified in our scoping comments. Second, the assessment of impacts identified during scoping should drive the consideration of project alternatives, regardless of whether the Forest Service completes an EA or EIS. The Forest Service should consider alternatives that avoid or minimize the host of negative impacts associated with the current proposal. We hope and expect that the Forest Service will respond to these environmental and public concerns by going back to the drawing board to develop a sensible alternative that would protect and enhance the special forests and waters in the Cooper Creek watershed, not degrade them.

We commend the Forest Service for its assurance that the public will have another opportunity to comment on the draft analysis, even if it prepares an EA. It is important for the public to have an opportunity to review and comment on the adequacy of the environmental analysis before it is finalized. We hope that the Forest Service will develop and choose an alternative that conservation organizations can support. If concerns remain when the final EA or EIS is published, however, there will be an opportunity to ask a Forest Service official at a higher level to reconsider the decision. The Cooper Creek project is one of the first projects on the Chattahoochee that could use a new process for making these objections.

The scoping comments submitted by Georgia ForestWatch allow us to continue to participate in the environmental analysis and decision-making process by reviewing the environmental analysis, bringing important environmental information forward for the Forest Service's consideration, and proposing reasonable alternatives to the initial proposal, as well as preserving the right to object to a harmful decision. ■

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# Learning about lichens

by Tom Colkett : District Leader

On March 29th of this year, about 25 people (including five Georgia ForestWatch members) were lucky enough to participate in a Citizens Science Lichen Bioblitz and Workshop offered by the Coweeta Long-Term Ecological Research at the Coweeta Hydrologic Laboratory in Otto, North Carolina.

We were invited to "learn about lichen ecology and join two of the Southeast's premier lichenologists to help document lichen diversity". This was too good to resist. My "expertise", up to that point, was to point at something and say, "It's a lichen I think". (Also a tendency to repeat the old pneumonic device: Alice the algae took a likin' to Fred the Fungus). Now, maybe I could start learning to identify the various lichen types and also help out in a worthwhile conservation cause.

So, what are lichens?

Basically, a lichen is a composite organism in which a fungus and an alga grow in a symbiotic relationship. This relationship is different from all other such relationships in nature because the two combine to form a new body, a thallus, that doesn't resemble either a fungus or an alga. We were told that there is still debate in the scientific community as to whether this relationship should even be described as mutually beneficial; perhaps "enslavement" might be a better description. The alga is given an opportunity to operate in full sunlight by the "sun screening" properties of the fungus while the alga photosynthesizes food (sugars) for both participants. The alga, however, is heavily restricted as to reproduction in this relationship, since it cannot reproduce on its own. In contrast, the fungus is free to reproduce both sexually and non-sexually, and the lichen reproduces both as a fungus (looking for the proper alga) and as a lichen.

In the Saturday morning class for beginners, we learned that there are three main types of lichen: 1) **foliose** (leaf like); 2) **fruticose** (shrubby or hair-like); and, 3) **crustose** (crust-like). There are subdivisions, of course, but we won't get into that in this article.

Here's a little information about the three types. See if you can recognize any of these.

**Foliose lichens** are mainly flat and prostrate, but have an upper and lower surface. The body (thallus) of these lichens is usually attached to their substrata by fine black hairs (rhizines) but not always. They can almost always be removed from their substrata intact either with a knife or by hand. The thallus is also typically divided into numerous branches called lobes. The large brownish/grayish lichens you see hanging from large boulders are in a subset of foliose lichens, umbilicate, and are attached only at one point to the rock. The common name for these is rock tripe. If you keep an eye out for them while hiking, they are almost anywhere in moist cove-type forests with large boulders.

*Photo credit: Malcolm Hodges*

*Rock shield, a foliose lichen.*

**Fruticose lichens** have simple or divided branches that are round to flattened. They are shrub-like or hairy, and are attached to their substrate very loosely. When growing on trees, they can become detached and fall to the ground.

**Crustose lichens** can be difficult to discern from some of the close-growing foliose lichen, but they do not have a lower surface. They grow into their substrate and cannot be removed in whole without chiseling away some of the substrate with it; consequently, common tools of lichen collectors include a chisel and small hammer. You will see them attached very tightly to tree bark and rocks. The margins tend to be unlobed and sometimes fade into the substrate becoming indistinct.

Some crustose lichens contain an anti-fungal agent in the margins to combat other lichens that may be trying to establish themselves on the same surface. If you look closely at some crustose lichens on rocks, you may get to see such an ongoing battle.

Lichens do not have a season for reproduction and can reproduce sexually and non-sexually at any time of the year.

A fun side fact: Harris tweeds in Scotland used the lichen *Parmelia omphalodes* as the base of its textile dyes which gave them an additional advantage of repelling moths because the acids in these lichens are bitter.

*(continued on page 9)*

# Chipping the forest away

by David Govus : District Leader and Board Member

In 2008, the late Joe Gatins alerted Georgia ForestWatch of plans to establish an electricity generating plant in Rabun Gap, GA, fueled by wood chips. This biomass facility operated by Multitrade LLC was sited at a shuttered Fruit of the Loom textile plant which already had a wood-fired boiler that had been used to produce steam and electricity for its manufacturing process. Multitrade Rabun Gap LLC is controlled by Leaf Clean Energy, a private equity investment firm incorporated in the Cayman Islands and headquartered in London. This project was made possible by a $8,500,000 Tax Incentive Credit under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, as well as a long-term power purchase agreement by a collection of Electrical Membership Cooperatives acting as Green Power EMC. This power purchase agreement gives the electric cooperatives the ability to market 'green' power at a higher rate.

Gatins, a former Georgia ForestWatch Board president and active District Leader for the Chattooga River Ranger District, predicted that the existence of this facility would encourage timber cutting projects on national forest land. Along with many others, I thought this a remote possibility. Wood chips are generated from the 'waste' products of a logging operation. The logs go to the sawmill and the slash (tops and branches) is chipped by a giant machine, blown into the back of a tractor trailer van and hauled to the generating plant.

This process is very destructive to the forest as slash is important for nutrient recycling, soil health and erosion control. The tops, branches and leaves scattered around on a logging site reduce the sheet flow of water and soil loss from the site during a storm. Forest Service land in north Georgia is steep and the access roads

Photo credit: David Govus

*Chipper on East Ridge at Brawley Mountain.*

Photo credit: David Govus

*Logging operation on East Ridge at Brawley Mountain.*

for timber sales are narrow. Up until recently, tractor trailer trucks have not been seen way back in the woods. Those of us who doubted that this Multitrade plant would utilize chips generated on Forest Service land also felt that the Forest Service would not allow such a destructive practice on public land. Joe Gatins was correct, and the other doubters and I were wrong.

As part of Georgia ForestWatch's long-term monitoring of the ongoing Brawley project, a recent visit was made to the final cutting unit. Much to our surprise, we discovered huge 'temporary' roads, a collection of tractor trailer vans, and a chipper set-up, as well as a bulldozer used to construct the roads, a track hoe with a cutter head to fell timber, and huge skidders with chained wheels to drag the logs to the loading yard and chipper. The chips generated were being hauled half way across the state to the Multitrade facility. The area looked more like site preparation for a future Walmart than a logging operation. The many trips by tractor trailers, bulldozers, skidders and track hoe had compacted the soil as hard as concrete. There is no question that this timbering and chipping operation has significantly impaired the fertility, soil structure and overall soil health of this site for decades to come.

In return for this destruction, what benefit has the public received from this chipping? The burning of wood chips in Multitrade's boilers releases more carbon than burning fossil fuels. The Multitrade facility is a refurbished, older facility, and as such, was allowed to begin operations without having to employ the latest pollution control measures. A July 23rd, 2012, article in the Wall Street Journal reports that of the 107 U.S. biomass plants that the Journal could confirm were operating at the start of that year, 85 had been cited by state or federal regulators for violating air-pollution or water-pollution standards at some time during the previous five years. The power sold at Multitrade is more expensive than conventional power.

*(continued on page 9)*

## Learning About Lichens

*(continued from page 7)*

So, armed with some basic information like the above we went into the field with trained lichenologists and spent the rest of the day collecting specimens, labeling the location from which they were taken, and noting the substratum (rocks, ground or type of tree, etc.), then brought everything back to the classroom for the following day.

On Sunday morning after breakfast, we got to play scientist, and it was here that I realized I am truly a frustrated scientist wannabe! With over 200 collected samples spread out on the tables, we got to choose whichever one(s) appealed to us, sit down with the authoritative text (by Irwin Brodo), and start searching for it. At first it was overwhelming and we were not even sure where to look. But as the day went on, and with guidance from our expert lichenologists, we began to settle in and identify some lichens.

In about 6 hours, I was able to identify only about four or five species (yes, it was that slow); but the whole learning process was extremely rewarding when I finally keyed out each specimen. The difficulty lies in the fact that very different species can resemble each other to a degree indiscernible to the naked eye. Each one had to be put under the microscope where it could be closely viewed for evidence of reproducing bodies that can be diagnostic, such as spores, soredia, isidia, apothecia and pycnidia. This article is too short to go into more detail, but different lichens reproduce through different mechanisms and some, but not all, of them are visible to the naked eye. The dissecting microscopes not only allowed us to be very clear about what we were seeing, but also were critical for the actual dissection process that was almost always needed to make a final pronouncement of genus and species.

Upon dissection of the thallus, the algal layer becomes visible, and this was quite exciting at first for beginners such as ourselves. But, the most amazing revelation is that the internal layers of the thallus contain tell-tale chemicals that react to other applied chemicals such as calcium hypochlorite (bleaching powder), potassium hydroxide (caustic lye) and paraphenylenediamine. The chemical reaction is immediate, and the resulting color definitively identifies the lichen.

*Photo credit: Malcolm Hodges*

*Two species of fruticose ground lichens (reindeer mosses),* Cladonia evansii *and* C. subtenuis. *These lichens resemble clusters of white flowers or miniature tumble weeds, growing on the ground.*

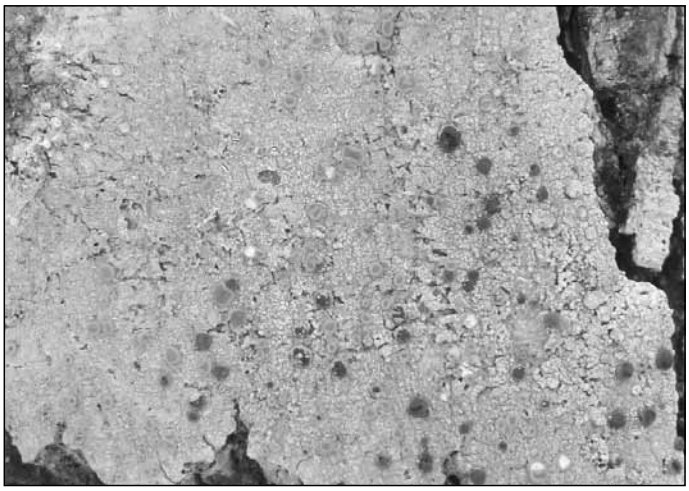

*Photo credit: Troy McMullin*

*This* Brigantiaea Leucoxantha *or "golden dots" is an example of a crustose lichen.*

At the end of the day, with approximately 15 of us working on this part of the project, we were able to identify about 85 different species with lots left over for future lab work.

After we left, the remaining lichens were stored in a hot attic to dry out, after which they will be moved to a freezer to kill off any remaining "critters" that survive the drying process. Then there is the possibility of being invited back to participate in another round of lab work to identify the remaining samples. I for one would be glad to go back and learn more about these fascinating organisms.

If you would like to learn more about lichens in the field, Georgia ForestWatch is offering a lichen identification hike with Malcolm Hodges, Director of Stewardship, The Nature Conservancy in Georgia. The outing will be on July 12th and will be held in the Brasstown Bald area. If you're interested, please call the office (706-867-0051) for details. ■

## Chipping the Forest Away

*(continued from page 8)*

When one factors in the amount of fossil fuels burned to power the bulldozers, chipper, skidders and trucks to haul the chips, the logging and chipping operation alone at Brawley has resulted in a huge net release of carbon into the atmosphere. The chips release even more carbon when burned. And after 4 years of cutting, burning and herbicide application, the forest at Brawley is capturing only a small fraction of the $CO_2$ that the original forest fixed or sequestered. It is discouraging that federal subsidies intended to produce cleaner energy and to mitigate climate change have had the opposite effect.

Georgia ForestWatch reviewed the Environmental Analysis that was issued when the Brawley project was approved. This analysis, required by the National Environmental Policy Act, stated categorically that no whole-tree removal would be allowed. Georgia ForestWatch and our partner, The Southern Environmental Law Center, will raise the question with the Forest Service as to how this chipping was permitted. Failure to follow procedures specified in Environmental Assessments is a serious matter. ■

# Trash warriors

by Brenda Smith and Laura Stachler

There's no better way to help clean and restore a river and its fundamental tributaries than to just get out there and do it with your own two hands – so that's exactly what we did. In the cleanups leading up to the celebratory event to mark the 40th anniversary of the Chattooga River's Wild & Scenic designation, representatives from Georgia ForestWatch, the Chattooga River Ranger District, and the Chattooga Conservancy, along with some great family and friends, all pitched in to improve the water quality and scenic beauty of the mighty Chattooga. The strategic cleanup sites included Scott Creek in downtown Clayton; Sandy Ford, Dick's Creek, and Stekoa Creek – Chattooga confluences; and Stekoa Creek at Stekoa Creek Park near downtown Clayton.

The Sandy Ford and Dick's Creek – Chattooga confluence cleanup on June 6th was one of special note as we had the youngest volunteer from all of the cleanups present. At age 13, William Cannon, grandson of Brenda Smith, dove right into the effort, not only contributing his invaluable help but also interesting stories and positive spirit along the way. Jay Noe, a guest from The Mountain High Hiking Club based in Young Harris, came along with his big diesel truck and the volunteers fit into the extended cab perfectly. We headed down War Woman Road with gloves, trash bags, and determination. We were trash warriors on a mission and ready to do battle!

Sandy Ford was aptly named because wagons used to ford the shallow section of the river on their travels between Georgia and South Carolina. Sadly, easy access to this lovely place has lead to abuse of the worst kind, including messy campsites and illegal dumping. We dug broken glass out of make shift campfire rings, along with old squashed pots, plastic and glass bottles, cans, cigarette butts, rags and dirty diapers. You name it, it was buried in those blackened ashes!

Photo credit: Laura Stachler

*Trash from the Scott Creek cleanup.*

Photo credit: Jay Noe

*Volunteers at the Sandy Ford cleanup.*

We sat on a boulder and enjoyed a cold drink and a snack before piling back into the truck and heading up the road to Dick's Creek, where we checked the access trail to the falls for more litter. Any trash spotted along the gullies and banks were collected as we drove along. Dick's Creek is a beautiful sight as it tumbles into the Chattooga, and this was our reward as we stopped and patted ourselves on the back for helping to clean up the waterway. Good conversation, laughter, and a chance to teach a member of the younger generation respect for our wild places made for another great cleanup in Rabun County.

It's remarkable to see what we put into our drinking water. Not only did we find plastic bags, hoses, and the other "expected" pollutants, but we found a vacuum cleaner, living room rugs, car bumpers, multiple tires, the list goes on. It was disturbing to see how many macro invertebrates had set up residence in these unnatural items, all of which were slowly breaking down and contaminating their environment. If you've ever visited any of these incredible waterways, you know the beauty speaks for itself. After just a few hours of effort at each site, a tremendous and positive impact was made on these waterways – an unwavering inspiration to continue such an influential effort.

For more information on attending a Georgia ForestWatch outing or volunteer opportunity, please contact us at info@gafw.org or at 706.867.0051. ■

# Warwoman wildflower hike with Brenda Smith

by Ted Doll : Board Member

Sometimes things just work out – pleasant company and ideal weather on a beautiful trail. So it was on a comfortably cool, sunny Saturday on April 26 that we started out from Warwoman Dell Recreation Area in the Chattahoochee National Forest east of Clayton. It was a perfect day to enjoy Warwoman Dell and to reflect on its history and namesake.

Warwoman Dell and Warwoman Creek are named after a woman the Cherokee called "warwoman". Although there is some debate over which woman is the actual namesake, the stories associated with Warwoman Dell seem to more closely match those associated with Nancy Ward, or "Nanye-hi" in Cherokee. Nanye-hi (ca. 1738–1822) was a beloved woman of the Cherokee, which means that she was allowed to sit in councils and to make decisions, along with the chiefs[1]. She was born around 1738 in the Cherokee capital, Chota, in what today is Monroe County, Tennessee. According to legend, she married the Cherokee Tsu-la or "Kingfisher" about 1751. In the Battle of Taliwa against the Creeks, she lay behind a log in order to chew his bullets so that the resulting jagged edges might create more damage. When Kingfisher was killed, Nanye-hi picked up his rifle and continued the fight, leading her people to victory. Afterwards, at the age of 18, she was awarded the title of "Ghighau", making her a member of the tribal council of chiefs. She was also named the leader of the Women's Council of Clan Representatives and took over the role of ambassador and negotiator for her people.

Warwoman's history only enhanced our sense of place and helped us appreciate the natural beauty of the Dell. Our present-day hike leader, Brenda Smith, was joined by Eric Weir, Dan Rawlins, Patricia Howell, Patty Lowe and myself. We walked from Warwoman Dell Recreation Area up a steep path that joins the Bartram Trail. After about 2.5 miles we reached beautiful Martin's Creek Falls, where we had lunch and then retraced our steps. Before departing the area, we strolled the lovely trails in the Warwoman Dell Recreation Area. As if the pleasant company and weather weren't enough, we had a terrific wildflower display, and four folks in our group who were very knowledgeable about native plants. They included Patricia Kyritsi Howell, herbalist and expert on medicinal plants. Patricia is the author of *Medicinal Plants of the Southern Appalachians*. In addition, Brenda, Dan, and Patty also helped identify the numerous wildflowers and native plants. The pictures accompanying this article show just a sampling of the many native plants and wildflowers we saw along the trail. Many thanks to Brenda Smith for leading this and many other Georgia ForestWatch hikes! ■

[1]http://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biography/biographies/nanye-hi-nancy-ward/

*Photo credits: Ted Doll*

*Hikers viewing the falls.*

*Green and gold*

*Bellwort*

*Yellow lady slipper*

*Pinkshell azalea*

**JOIN NOW!** Complete this form and mail to:
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