GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

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Native carpenter bee pollinating our native passionflower

Don't Kill the Carpenter Bees

Spring is warming, and large carpenter bees (*XylPayocopa*) have started flying. Please remember that carpenter bees are a beneficial and vital part of our ecosystem. Since our American bee populations are declining, we need to protect this essential pollinator.

Unlike honeybees, carpenter bees are one of the 4,000 native bee species in North America. Since honeybees are highly regarded for their honey-producing capabilities, we often forget native bees. Native bees and native plant species are irrevocably linked: many native plant species have developed structures and scents to attract specific pollinators. Our native bee species have acquired specialized pollen and nectar collecting methods for these native plants. When we have more native bee diversity, we have more plant diversity because there are ample opportunities for pollination, especially by specialist pollinators.

In addition to providing support for native ecosystems, carpenter bees and other native bees are crucial for agriculture production. Here in Georgia, producers grow a wide variety of crops that rely on bee pollinators: squash, watermelon, peppers, apples, blueberries, and strawberries, to name a few! Even cattle rely on bee pollinators for their nutritious forage sources. Our carpenter bees are key pollinators of blackberries and peppers throughout the state.

Many homeowners believe that carpenter bees like to consume wood. However, carpenter bees don't feed on wood; they burrow into wood to make their nests. Carpenter bees are solitary bees, and they are nonaggressive. The male carpenter bee does not have a stinger. Males are the bees you see hovering around your porch because they are tasked with protecting the nest from other flying insects. Female bees have stingers, but they will only sting if provoked by touching or handling. If you try to shoo carpenter bees away, they may fly closer to you, but there is no need to feel threatened.

Although carpenter bees are not yet endangered like other bees native to North America, their populations are steadily declining due to loss of habitat and food sources, pesticide use, invasive species, and a general lack of concern for their welfare.

Instead of trapping and killing carpenter bees, consider a "bee house" as an easy way to encourage relocation. You can build one from wood or purchase one online and set it up somewhere in your yard away from areas you do not want them to build. Bee houses should be at least six inches deep because that's the size bees build their nests. One option is the Rivajam Mason Refillable Bee House. To further encourage their nesting in a selected location, plant native wildflowers nearby that bloom in spring, summer, and fall to ensure plenty of pollen and nectar sources; you could even plant some peppers and blackberries too!

GAFW Responds

GAFW recently submitted comments on two U.S. Forest Service proposed culvert replacement projects. One in Union County to replace a culvert crossing on Duncan Ridge Road at Mulky Creek and another in Rabun County on Hale Ridge Road at Metcalf Creek.

GAFW supports both projects as long as certain standards are incorporated during the implementation. GAFW supports and appreciates the USFS prioritizing efforts to maintain and modernize infrastructures, like culvert maintenance projects and the use of the public notification and comment process.

However, in the Hale Ridge project, the USFS stated in their scoping letter that "additional culverts" may also be replaced without additional notification. GAFW is opposed to any expansion of the stated project without additional site-specific information and the opportunity for public notification and comments.

In addition to concerns regarding mountain bog habitats, home to the rare Mountain Purple Pitcherplant (Sarracenia purpurea var. montana), the USFS should not authorize additional work at Hale Ridge until the exact location of actions are known and potential effects evaluated.

Camping Limited in CONF

Camping is now limited to 14 days within the Chattahoochee-Oconee

National Forests. In 2021, the USFS proposed Camping Limitations changing the camping regulations from a 30 day maximum stay down to 14 days due to significant increases in camping and other recreational activities.

Our organization very much supports recreational use within the CONF that does not detract from the health of the forest, leave any temporary or long-term destruction, or adversely affect the experience of other forest users and benefactors.

GAFW Outings

Enjoy an Outing and Learn About Our Forests

Coming Up
Registration is required

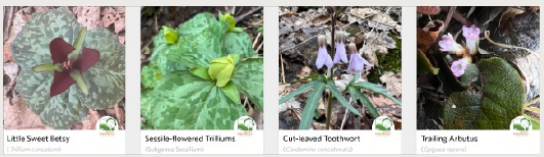
Outing! Murder Creek Research Area with JP 4.22.22

Wish you had found out about our Outings sooner? Join us as a Georgia ForestWatch member and get the first notification of all of our Outings.

Learn More

Photos! Recent Outings

iNaturalist @gaforestwatch
Community Science and species identification!



Legislative Updates

Unfortunately, HB 1150, known as the Bad Neighbor Bill, passed both chambers on the final day of the Georgia General Assembly. It strips from Georgia law existing right to farm protections. It also flips the balance of protections from long-time rural Georgia landowners to industrial corporate agricultural operations and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO). The approval signals to large-scale poultry and dairy operations to proliferate in Georgia.

Long-time residents nearby will have far less recourse if the new operations cause harmful environmental impacts to neighboring properties. The bill also exposes existing farmers to nuisance actions from which they were previously shielded. The bill's major proponents have put at risk the property rights and values of many of our longest-tenured farmers across the state. Hopefully, impacts are minimal, but the path has been paved for significant

environmental degradation, and property devaluation with little recourse to those in position to most feel the impacts.

The Build Back Better bill that passed the House last year would have funded important U.S. Forest Service projects. It included old-growth protections initiatives, funding of $450M for road and trail maintenance, and research strategies to increase carbon stocks and address climate change. Unfortunately, the bill floundered in the Senate. It appears to be permanently stalled.

Thank you to all who reached out to Georgia Senators Ossoff and Warnock to support the bill. GAFW will continue to monitor federal legislation and appropriations that support and provide the much-needed funding and policy changes that allow our nation's national forests to thrive.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, April 20, 2022 – Stop by and say "Hi" at our table at the University of North Georgia Gainesville Campus 2022 Earth Day celebration.

Thursday, April 21, 2022 – We will have a table at the University of North Georgia Dahlonega Campus 2022 Earth Day celebration from 11-2pm organized by The Sustainability Club.

Saturday, April 23, 2022 – We will be with the North Georgia Conservation Coalition Earth Day program at the Dawsonville Bowen Center for the Arts.

Saturday, April 23, 2022 – Look for us at theEarth Day event at the Sautee Nacoochee Center.

Tuesday-Friday, May 24-27, 2022 – Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network & Consortium for Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, Dillard, GA.

If this email was forwarded to you, please register here to receive updates from Georgia ForestWatch.

Need a Camp Reservation?

Planning to join us at Lake Winfield Scott for the annual retreat? Send us an email at info@gafw.org if you would like to reserve a camping spot at Lake Winfield Scott or Vogel State Park.

Past Issues of ForestNews

In our quarterly print newsletter, ForestNews, you'll learn about the most recent forest issues and stay current on happenings within the Georgia ForestWatch community. You can take a trip down memory lane from the archives in all the past issues.

Are you a longtime member with a stash of old newsletters? Please let us know if you have any that are not on the site.

Thank You

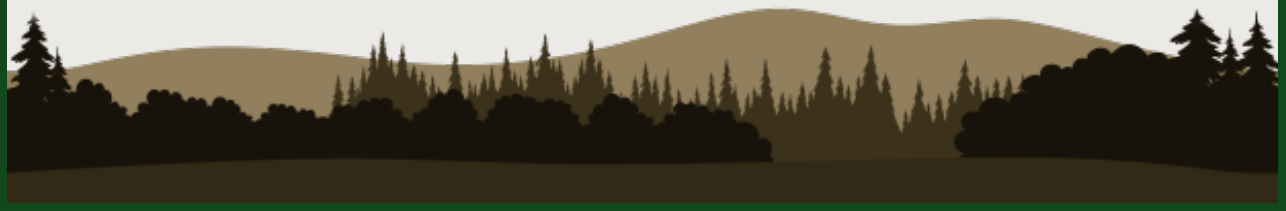
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

In 2021 donations from individuals, such as yourself, provided for 72% of our budget, and we are asking again in 2022 for your support.

Please support our mission by ensuring your membership is up to date and providing additional support as you are able.

On behalf of our entire national forests in our beautiful state, we thank you for your support.

Connect with us

Our Mission

Our mission is to enhance the health of over 867,000 acres of Georgia's national forest by protecting our forests and streams, advocating for natural processes, and identifying opportunities to improve forest management. Visit Georgia ForestWatch (GAFW) to learn more.