GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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Indigenous Public Land Acknowledgment

One hundred and ninety-two years ago, on May 28, 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law. Passed just days earlier by the U.S. Congress, it is one of the darkest days in our country's history that led to the forced migration of Georgia's indigenous people, known as the Trail of Tears. The Cherokee worked together to stop this relocation but were unsuccessful; they were eventually forcibly removed by the United States government in an act of genocide.

The Cherokee removal in 1838 (the last forced removal east of the Mississippi) was brought on by the ever-increasing population of nonnative farmers and the discovery of gold. The Cherokee homeland of north Georgia was highly attractive to farmers resulting in many illegal settlements by pioneers. Long-simmering tensions between Georgia and the Cherokee Nation were brought to a crisis by the discovery of gold near Dahlonega in 1829, resulting in the Georgia Gold Rush. Hopeful gold speculators began trespassing on Cherokee lands, and pressure mounted to fulfill the Compact of 1802. The U.S. Government promised to extinguish Indian land claims in Georgia.

While the final number is uncertain, an estimated 61,000 plus Cherokee, Muscogee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole were forcibly removed as a result of this legislation resulting in an upwards of 12,000 deaths from starvation, disease, weather, resistance, misery, and at the hands of the U.S. military under the official orders of the Commander in Chief President Jackson.

Georgia ForestWatch (GAFW), headquartered in Dahlonega, acknowledges the national forests and "public" lands our organization seeks to preserve, protect, and restore have been occupied by humans for at least 10,000 years and is home to the indigenous people forcibly removed. GAFW acknowledges that forced human displacement was supported, authorized, and enacted as the official policy of the U.S. and Georgia governments.

Our organization seeks to partner with indigenous peoples, members of modern tribes, and like-minded organizations and individuals to pursue all appropriate measures to reflect, remember, and enact policy changes to address these shameful events.

News You Can Use

Did you know Georgia has 16 native bat species? Many of which are rare, endangered, or threatened but all are vital to our natural ecosystems. Georgia DNR is looking for your help to monitor summer bat roosts across the state. This project involves counting bats exiting roosts at sunset just twice during each summer. Learn more here.

Photo: Evening bat, Credit: David Arbour, Georgia Biodiversity.org.

GAFW Office closed June 20 & July 4

Most of us learned that our nation's birthday on the Fourth of July is our truest expression of freedom.

However, that distinction is better recognized on June 19 or Juneteenth. July 4, 1776, symbolizes liberty and justice for some Americans. Still, it was not until two years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation that all oppressed peoples in America were freed from the bondage of slavery.

On June 19, 1865, Union troops arrived in Galveston, TX, finally freeing the more than 250,000 humans who had been relocated to the westernmost slaveholding state to avoid the executive order.

Our organization, Georgia ForestWatch, is proud to recognize our country's long struggle for freedom and inclusivity for all Americans – including those who were forcibly removed from Georgia and those forcibly relocated to Georgia. It will not be until all injustices are appropriately addressed, and we truly become the meritocracy we promote ourselves to be that our

nation can be exceptional.

Georgia ForestWatch takes both days, June 19, and July 4, away from the office to reflect and acknowledge our country's redemptions and failings, successes and disappointments, and for what our country was and what our country will hopefully one day be.

GAFW Partners

Check out the May newsletter from our partner the Benton Mckaye Trail Association. The BMTA does great work, and we appreciate the partnership.

GAFW Outings

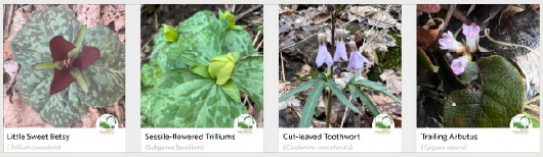
May Mountain Madness
A huge congrats to Bruce Beckham for getting out to all three lesser-known peaks for May Mountain Madness with us!

He's the one in light green shirt at the top of 3rd highest peak in Georgia.

Upcoming Outings!

Registration Required
Friday, June 17, Chattahoochee Watershed with Becca
Thursday, June 23, Salamanders of Mill Creek with Dr. Todd

iNaturalist @gaforestwatch
Community Science and species identification!



Upcoming Events

Saturday, June 11–Wild and Scenic Film Festival, Gainesville, GA.

Saturday, June 11–Clayton Dedication Ceremony, Destination City for AT Hikers.

Thursday, June 16– Wildlife & Carbon Webinar @ 12:00 pm EST

Saturday, September 10 – Elachee Wildlife Festival, Elachee Nature Science Center. Tabling event. Gainesville, GA

Wednesday, November 9 – Georgia Water Coalition Autumn Membership Meeting - Covington, GA

If this email was forwarded to you, please register here to receive updates

from Georgia ForestWatch.

Ways to Help GAFW

Donate an insurance policy

A gift of a life insurance policy makes a perfect donation. To qualify as a deductible gift, GAFW must become the policy owner. For most types of insurance policies, your tax deduction is usually the cost basis or the fair market value of the policy, whichever is less. Contact us at info@gafw.org for more information.

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.

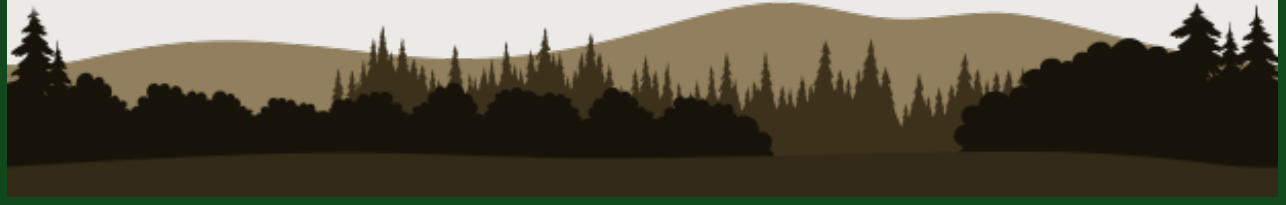
Thank You

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.

Please support our mission by ensuring yourmembership 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.