GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
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# FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

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## Trout Season is Upon Us

Fishing for trout in the mountains is a time-honored tradition, and when we think of trout in Georgia, most think rainbow trout due to its heavy stocking in most major streams north of Atlanta. But did you know that neither rainbow nor the lesser populated brown trout is native to our state? Our only native trout is the Southern Appalachian Brook Trout, and Georgia represents the southeastern limit of their natural range in the eastern United States. The almost 140 miles of streams supporting native brook trout populations are found entirely within the boundaries of the Chattahoochee National Forest.

Rainbow trout are native to countries bordering the Pacific Ocean from Mexico to Russia, which includes California to Alaska. The first artificially bred rainbows were first introduced into U.S. streams in 1872, and soon afterward, the breeding and stocking of rainbows spread throughout the country. They were introduced in lakes and streams devoid of fish preferred by sporting anglers and into streams containing native species of trout, such as the brook in Georgia.

Contemporary genetically modified (presently more than 75 strains) rainbows have several advantages to being bred and stocked as a sport fish. They are hardier and can withstand higher temperatures than other trout species, giving them an advantage in our warming climate and logged habitats with decreases in tree canopy over trout streams. It is abundantly clear that rainbows are extremely popular in Georgia and internationally, but their popularity has led them to be identified as **#63** on the top 100 world's worst invasive species. Our best friend kudzu is #77,

giving you some idea of their impact.

Research has shown that rainbows displace native trout, and heavy stocking alters the aquatic invertebrate community to the detriment of other fish species. A recent experimental eradication of rainbows from several Great Smoky Mountain NP streams demonstrated how native brook trout could quickly rebound once their competitors were removed. **Trout Unlimited,** whose staff and volunteers work nationally to protect, reconnect, restore, and sustain trout habitats, the official policy states they are "**opposed to…stocking non-native hatchery trout on top of native trout populations.**"

In Georgia, the Department of Natural Resources manages our breeding and stocking in partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife. First obtained as eggs or four-inch fish, then grown to catchable size at three state hatcheries and one federal hatchery before stocking. More than 1 million ten-inch rainbows are stocked annually in Georgia to accommodate the more than 100,000 trout fishing licenses sold yearly. The recent good news is that the GA DNR Trout Survey Team monitored the Cooper Creek drainage in search of undocumented brook trout populations, revealing two previously unknown populations containing multiple size classes.

It is likely an unpopular stance to eliminate rainbow stocking in Georgia, but that may be due to most not realizing its invasive status and impact on our ecosystems. Here at GAFW, we appreciate going trout fishing after work, but there may be room for compromise. Rainbows have an undisputable impact on our ecosystem, even if not widely acknowledged, but perhaps we could agree on a "wild" trout compromise that stops the stocking but allows for rainbows to reproduce naturally. This would allow for "wild" trout that are not native. Some states are turning away from stocking hatchery-bred fish and prioritizing resources to improve the habitats of native trout. Could Georgia be next?

For more information, join us on next week's **tour of the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery**, and visit the **GA DNR trout fishing page** , where you can see all stocked streams and sign up for the weekly stocking report.

## The American Chestnut Foundation Annual Meeting

The **Georgia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation** will hold its annual general membership meeting in Dahlonega at UNG on May 13th, 2023.

The meeting will include a presentation by **Dr. Scott Merkle**, UGA Warnell School of Forestry, on his work on transgenic chestnut research to develop Georgia-parent

chestnuts with resistance to chestnut blight. We will also give a science update on the Georgia Chapter's recent work supporting the national chestnut restoration program.

They will also screen the new documentary feature on the American Chestnut restoration efforts (featuring Jimmy Carter, Dolly Parton, and Chuck Leavell) and have a field trip to the UNG Hurricane Creek site, where they are establishing a chestnut test orchard.

The meeting is open to the public, and there is no charge to attend. Please contact **Jack Rogers**, President, Georgia Chapter, for more information.

## Join the GAFW Book Club

We are excited to announce our first selection for the GAFW Book Club.

***Even As We Breathe***, by **Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle** and published by **Fireside Industries**, is our April selection. **Email** us for more information. We hope you will join us.

Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle is an enrolled citizen of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and resides in Qualla, NC, with her husband, Evan, and sons, Ross and Charlie. She holds degrees from Yale University and the College of William and Mary. Her debut novel, Even As We Breathe, was released by the University Press of Kentucky in 2020, a finalist for the Weatherford Award, and named one of NPR's Best Books of 2020. In 2021, it received the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award. Her first novel manuscript, Going to Water, is the winner of the Morning Star Award for Creative Writing from the Native American Literature Symposium (2012) and a finalist for the PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction (2014). Clapsaddle's work has appeared in Yes! Magazine, Lit Hub, Smoky Mountain Living Magazine, South Writ Large, and The Atlantic. After serving as executive director of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, Annette returned to teaching at Swain County High School for over a dozen years. She is the former co-editor of the Journal of Cherokee Studies and serves on the Board of Directors for the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, and is the President of the Board of Trustees for the North Carolina Writers Network. Clapsaddle established Bird Words, LLC in 2022 and works as an independent contractor and consultant.

***Even As We Breathe:*** Nineteen-year-old Cowney Sequoyah yearns to escape his hometown of Cherokee, North Carolina, in the heart of the Smoky Mountains. When a summer job at Asheville's luxurious Grove Park Inn and Resort brings him one step closer to escaping the hills that both cradle and suffocate him, he sees it as an opportunity.

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## Upcoming GAFW Outings

**Wednesday, April 5 - Tour the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery,** Suches, GA. 10:00 am.

**Saturday, April 8 -** Private Hike & Tour - **Lula Lake Land Trust with Debbie**, Lookout Mountain, GA. 11:00 am.

**Thursday, April 13** - **Raven Cliffs Falls Restorative Hike with Jessica & Maria** , Helen, GA. 11 am.

**Saturday, April 22 - Wildflowers & Waterfall Hike at Mount Airy Creek with Jess,** Dahlonega, GA. 10 am.

**Thursday, April 27** - **Keown Falls & Johns Mountain with Bill & Leslie,** NW GA, near Resaca, GA. 10:00 am.

**Saturday, May 6** - **Cooper's Creek-Old Growth "Valley of the Giants" with Melanie & Cliff**, 10:00 am.

**Thursday, May 11** - **Cradle of Forestry Guided Tour** , Pisgah Forest, NC. 1 pm.

**Saturday, October 14** - Save the Date! GAFW Annual Retreat at Red Top Mountain.

**Interested in leading a hike or other outing for GAFW?** We are searching for additional leaders who are willing to share their favorite parts of the forest. Let us know at **outreach@gafw.org**.

GAFW Outings on Meetup

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## Thank You

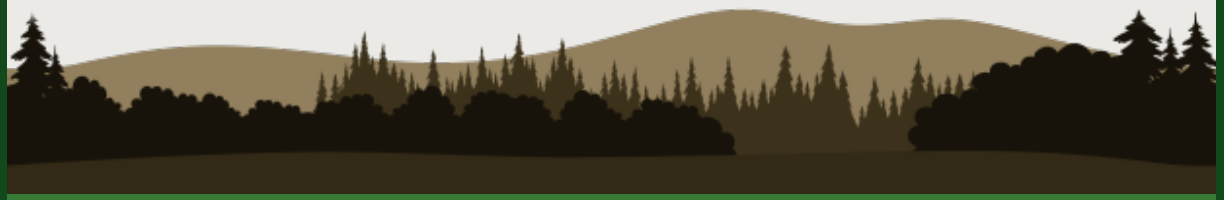
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

Please support our mission by ensuring 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.

# 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.



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