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## Acuity Green Team

By Robert Phillips, Volunteer Coordinator

The Georgia Wildlife Federation® succeeds because volunteers give willingly to help us fulfill our mission. As part of Earth Share of Georgia's recent Corporate Green Day Challenge, volunteers from Acuity Brands Lighting met at the Alcovy Conservation Center (ACC) in Covington. The mission was to remove Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) from the wetlands at the facility, forwarding one of the priority actions of Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) — the removal of invasive exotic species.

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Pictured above: Dana Martin, Sheryl Lyn Fisher, Patricia Hamilton, Christopher Morgan, Kim Morgan, Amy Wiley, and Andy Hodges.

Green heron (*Butorides virescens*)



## Volunteers "Capture" MCNC Wildlife

Volunteers contribute to the work of GWF in diverse and creative ways. Talented photographer and native plant enthusiast Hank Ohme has photographed Mill Creek Nature Center landscape and its flora and fauna for years. Now, he and Chris Gray, named GWF Volunteer of the Year in 2005, are collaborating on a project to

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# The Call



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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# Achievements and Milestones Updates From Three Conservation Centers

By Jerry L. McCollum, President and CEO

From time to time we highlight achievements or milestones we reached as the oldest and largest statewide conservation organization. We're proud of the great work that's been accomplished in the name of the Georgia Wildlife Federation and we want others to know about it, as well.

In this column, I call attention to three such achievements and milestones — collectively representing our presence throughout the state. They are examples of different aspects of our work and of the way in which we meet the needs of the communities we touch.

At GWF's Wharton Conservation Center, the 129 acres of pristine mountain land in the headwaters of the Tallulah River owned by the late, visionary conservationist Dr. Charles Wharton and donated for permanent protection to the Georgia Wildlife Federation by his estate, an important conservation project is just getting underway. This effort, led by Dr. Betsy Rothermel, Assistant Professor of Biology and Principal Investigator for The Center of Excellence for Field Biology at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN, will inventory the amazing diversity of reptiles and amphibians on the property. Two graduate researchers will assist.

Dr. Wharton had purchased the property as a personal effort to protect the unique biodiversity he observed in the area. Dr. Rothermel's project will amplify his assessment that the area was one of the most diverse in flora and fauna in the entire state. The results of this research certainly will underscore the special place that is the Wharton Conservation Center.

And this private effort to preserve rare and special lands reminds us of the need for permanent funding for land conservation in Georgia where we must have a public and private effort to protect the enormous natural diversity of our great state.

On April 19th, GWF's Mill Creek Nature Center became part of Gwinnett County's award-winning greenway system. Our 88-acre tract has been the site of numerous volunteer activities over the past 4-plus years, all created and coordinated by Volunteer Coordinator Christina Marr, even though the park was not open to the public. But on this damp Saturday a few weeks ago, we participated in the Grand Opening of the County's Ivy Creek Greenway, stretching nearly three miles along the creek that runs between the southern boundary of the Mall of Georgia in Buford and I-85. GWF volunteers manned information stations and answered questions about this special greenspace in the middle of a rapidly growing community for much of the day. Now, the Greenway is open from daybreak to dark daily, although portions of MCNC will continue to be open with permission only. Check our

*continued on page 4*



# Buckaramas® 2008 Are Just Around the Corner

By Sam Stowe, Director of Marketing

**G**eorgia Wildlife Federation™ (GWF) is making plans for another terrific season of Buckaramas®, in both Atlanta and Perry. These shows are important to GWF in that the funds raised at these shows allow us to carry on important work protecting the rights of sportsmen through the Camo Coalition, and through conservation programs that protect habitat and clean water.

GWF will offer the sportsmen and women of Georgia events that showcase gear, products and technology — the newest and the tried-and-true — for hunters and anglers, and for other outdoor enthusiasts as well.

New to the Buckarama in Perry this year will be an archery tournament sponsored by Mid Eastern Georgia Archers. This tournament will feature a pre-qualified division as well as an open division, allowing any paid show attendee to participate. The always popular FFA Archery and Daisy® BB Range will return for the kids' enjoyment. The GWF Deer Head Competition for 2008, open to all show attendees, will be completely redesigned. Winners from each category and each show, Atlanta and Perry, will compete for cash and prizes in a competition at the Perry Buckarama. Visit [www.gwf.org](http://www.gwf.org) for more information.

**Mark your calendar: Atlanta Buckarama is July 31 - August 3; the Perry Buckarama is August 15 - 17, 2008. We'll see you there!**



**This addition of a caterer's kitchen to the Alcovy Conservation Center marks the first step in expanding this premiere educational resource. Food setup is enhanced and can now be accomplished without disrupting other activities at the ACC. A separate entrance, complete with staging platform, is part of the expansion.**

## JOIN GWF

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# Brown Thrasher, Georgia's State Bird: In Danger?

By Carol Hassell, *The Call* Editor



Photo by Thomas Klak

Is our state bird in danger of disappearing from Georgia? I posed the question to Tim Keyes, a wildlife biologist with the Wildlife Resources Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. "There is no real evidence of Brown Thrasher (*Toxstoma rufum*) declines in Georgia, at least according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey," he says. "The population has fluctuated a bit since 1966 and currently looks on a small dip, but so far nothing bigger than it has experienced in the past. There are many other species of much higher conservation concern."

The Brown Thrasher, a summer or year-round resident throughout Georgia, is a large bird, 9 to 12 inches in length with a wing span of 11 to 13 inches, making it similar in size to an American Robin or Blue Jay. It is reddish-brown on the crown, back and tail, with white wingbars and whitish or buff underparts heavily streaked with black. The bird's bill is longish and slender; its face is gray with yellow eyes. Brown Thrashers feed on insects, such as beetles, fruits and nuts. It is a mimic, much like the Northern Mockingbird, its smaller cousin, and has one of the largest repertoires of any bird on the continent. Phrases, repeated twice, are frequently melodious and cheery.

According to an American Bird Conservancy and National Wildlife Federation study called *Global Warming & Songbirds*, distribution of Brown Thrasher in Georgia could begin to shrink with as little as a 4-degree annual average temperature increase."

But Keyes counters, "This is extremely implausible to me, as (the birds) breed from high elevation Georgia to mid-peninsular Florida. Local declines may certainly be occurring," he concluded, "and are most likely due to cleaning up the landscape of brushy, shrubby vegetation." The Cornell Lab of Ornithology reports that populations are declining slowly throughout the species' range (eastern two-thirds of the U.S.), citing habitat changes.

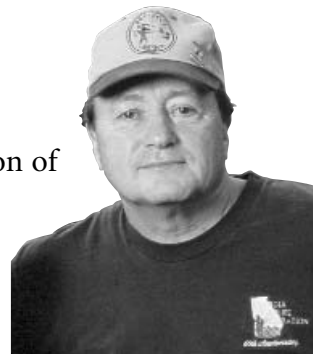
So, while we may not suffer the loss of this particular state icon, we can all play an important part in assuring the species' healthy survival in our own yards or landscapes: leave some brushy area in the back of the yard. It's just the sort of woodland edge or thicket this cheery-sounding bird loves to scratch around in, searching for food, and needs for nesting cover. The good news is that we can assure adequate numbers of our state bird by providing such unmanicured, brushy edges. 🌿

President's Column.....continued from page 2

website, [www.gwf.org](http://www.gwf.org), under Locations for a map of the Ivy Creek Greenway at MCNC.

At the Alcovy Conservation Center, we have put the finishing touches on an expansion of facilities at our Education Center, adding a caterer's kitchen as a first step in our program to upgrade the Center to better accommodate the growing quantity of educational events and conservation workshops we host. Check out the photo on page 3.

Finally, I hope you take every opportunity this summer to get out into the gardens, greenways, greenspace and habitat that makes Georgia so special. Enjoy it with me. 🌿



*Joseph McCallum*

# Crossvine

## *Bignonia capreolata*

By Leslie Kimel

**C**rossvine has very unique foliage. The leaves are trifoliate, but there are only two smooth-edged, oblong leaflets; the third is modified into a slender, curling tendril, which the vine uses for climbing and clinging. The foliage sticks around all year, changing color from season to season. In spring it's chartreuse, in summer it's leathery and dark, and in winter it turns purple!

But of course, you won't plant crossvine for its leaves; you'll plant it for its beautiful flowers. These are shaped like small trumpets, with flared, scalloped ends, and they're extremely abundant and showy—red-orange on the outside and yellow on the inside! They open in early spring, just as the ruby-throats are returning from their tropical wintering grounds. Nectar is scarce in the first weeks of the season (other early hummingbird plants include red buckeye and wild bleeding heart), so hungry hummers supplement their diets with tiny spiders, insects, and tree sap. 🕸️



Photo by Hank Ohme

**FAMILY:** Bignoniaceae (Trumpet-creeper Family)

**DESCRIPTION:** Semi-evergreen to evergreen woody vine with compound leaves composed of two oblong, 3-to-5-inch leaflets with a long slender tendril in between. Funnel-shaped red flowers bloom in spring. Maturing in summer, the fruits are long, flattened, bean-like pods filled with winged seeds. Cut the stem and you'll see how crossvine gets its common name: The pith is cross-shaped.

**SIZE:** 10 to 20 feet is the norm; sometimes reaches 30 to 50 feet.

**HABIT:** High-climbing, twining, clings by tendrils.

**GROWTH RATE:** Fast.

**LIGHT:** Full sun to light shade.

**PLANTING AND CARE:** Crossvine is tough and drought tolerant but makes its best growth in rich, moist soil. This vine is a fast grower, so you'll probably have to prune it to keep it in bounds.

**ORNAMENTAL VALUE:** In spring, loads of yellow-throated red flowers attract hummingbirds. The handsome foliage is nearly evergreen.

**LANDSCAPE USAGE:** Grow crossvine on a tree, trellis, fence, or wall; its delicate holdfasts won't harm wood or masonry.

**WILDLIFE BENEFITS:** Flowers attract ruby-throated hummingbirds.

**NATIVE HABITAT:** Found throughout Georgia in a variety of habitats, including floodplains, upland woods, and fencerows.

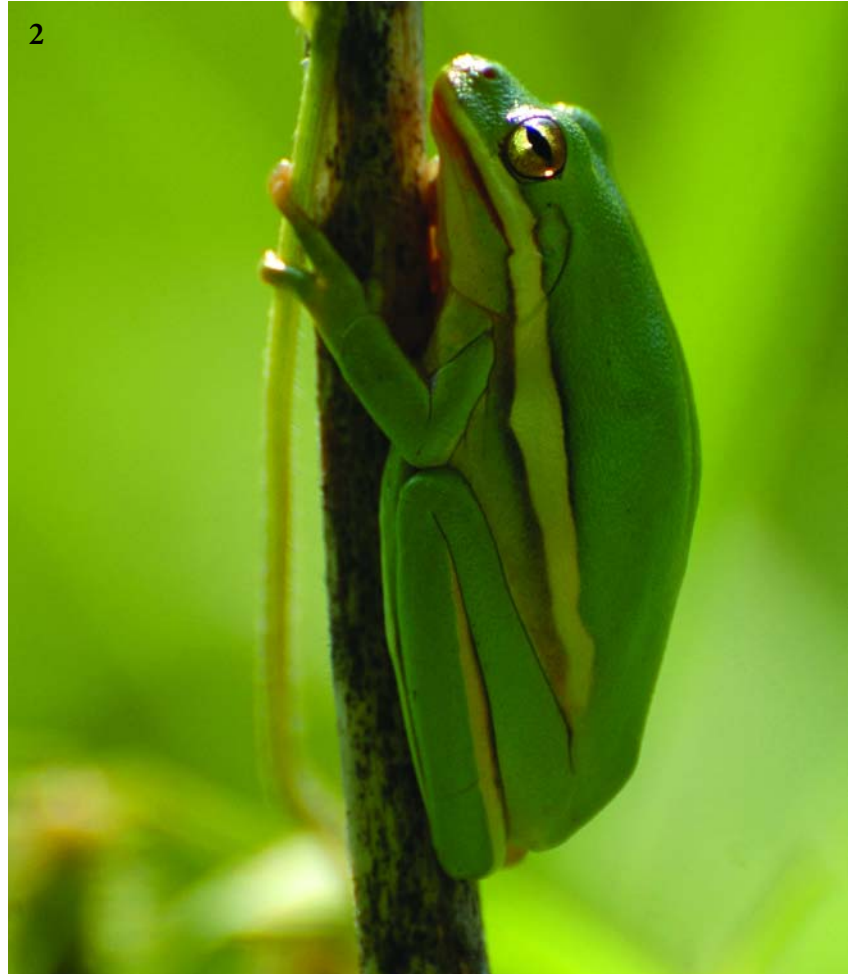
**PROPAGATION:** Seed (no pre-treatment is necessary), cuttings.

Volunteers “capture”..... continued from pg 1

map the locations of various species that flourish at the park near the Mall of Georgia. Here and on the front cover are a sampling from this project.

1. Common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)
2. Green treefrog (*Hyla cinerea*)

3. Ivy Creek meanders through a broad wetland at MCNC. The area benefited from required mitigation to offset the effects of construction at the Mall of Georgia.
4. Common buckeye (*Junoia coenia*)



## Mill Creek Nature Center Update

By Christina Marr, MCNC Volunteer & Program Coordinator

The month of May has come around again and at Mill Creek Nature Center that means celebrating "American Wetlands Month." Mill Creek Nature Center and the Georgia Wildlife Federation have celebrated American Wetlands Month the past three years by hosting a poster contest for children K-5th grade. This year's theme, "Climate Change and Wetlands" (as determined by the Izaak Walton League of America, Inc.) was a little more difficult for younger students to grasp but we still received some outstanding poster entries. The 2008 winner of the poster contest was Abigail Remaley, a 3rd grade student from Old Peachtree Montessori. Abigail had a simple message to pass on to others, "If people stop littering, then global warming will not affect the Earth as much." Abigail is right: Combatting litter is one small step that people can take to address the issues facing wetlands, wildlife and ecosystems around the world. For more information about how climate change is affecting wetlands and wildlife, visit [www.iwla.org/wetlands](http://www.iwla.org/wetlands).

Another celebration of American Wetlands Month at Mill Creek Nature Center took place on Saturday, May 17th. Wetland Walks were introduced to the public as an event that would broaden the public's view of wetlands, as well as give them a "sneak peek" of the center's trails. Wetland Walk participants, both children and adults, learned about the basic characteristics of wetlands, common wildlife and plants found in wetlands; explored the wetland waters using dip nets; and created animal track molds to take home with them. Everyone enjoyed the day and fond memories of wetlands will be remembered at Mill Creek Nature Center!

1. MCNC Volunteer, David Chestnut, helps Wetland Walk participants dip net the wetland waters for aquatic life.
2. MCNC Volunteer, Mike Robinson, helps Wetland Walk participant, Josh Lindsey, make an animal track mold.
2. American Wetlands Month poster contest winner, Abigail Remaley, and MCNC Volunteer & Program Coordinator, Christina Marr.
4. Abigail's winning poster.
5. Some of the interesting aquatic life found in the wetland waters.



# Concerns “Linger” Over Jekyll Island Redevelopment

Photo by Babs McDonald

By Sarah Gaines Barmeyer, Water Issues Coordinator

The debate over how state-owned Jekyll Island should be redeveloped continues to be highly contentious. More and more people are paying attention to the Jekyll Island Authority's actions, as they should because some redevelopment costs will be coming from the pockets of Georgia taxpayers.



Thanks to the efforts of Senator Jeff Chapman (R-Brunswick) and Representative Debbie Buckner (D-Junction City), several pieces of legislation were introduced during the 2008 session to protect public accessibility, but none were successful.

Georgia Wildlife Federation agrees that some redevelopment of Jekyll Island should take place: to freshen the island's outdated lodging and other establishments. However, this redevelopment must not jeopardize the unique aesthetics, accessibility, and affordability that draw millions of visitors to the island each year.

By law, 65 percent of Jekyll is to remain in its natural state. The remaining 35 percent is what is at stake to be developed. The Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) contracted with Linger Longer Communities (LLC) to redevelop certain portions of Jekyll Island. LLC's initial redevelopment plans consisted of a mile-long beachfront development with hundreds of condos, hotel rooms, time-share units, retail stores, parks, and more. The proposed development, however, encroached on sensitive sand dunes and would require LLC to obtain a permit under the Shore Protection Act. With so many concerned eyes watching Jekyll Island's redevelopment, the permitting process could prove to be a lengthy and litigious battle. Presently LLC has withdrawn their original plans and is revising them. Now we wait to see what development plans unfold next.

Concerns are rampant that the revised development plans will encroach on the extremely rare maritime forest situated in Jekyll's interior. Greg Krakow, data manager at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, performed plant surveys on Jekyll Island in 2007. He documented that the habitat includes a rare freshwater wetland and unique plants

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## Sportsman's Dinner & Auction

**August 28, 2008**

The Third Annual Sportsman's Dinner and Auction will be held Thursday August 28, 2008 at the Alcovy Conservation Center in Covington. Social hour and refreshments begin at 6:30 p.m., and an old-fashioned Pig-Picking and barbeque with all the trimmings starts at 7:30.



Once again, there will be a live auction featuring fabulous items such as a 2008 F150 Supercrew Lariat sponsored by our Local Ford Dealers, a Clipper Trail Ready Camper sponsored by Mid-State RV Center, a golf cart sponsored by Mike's Golf Carts, and a Honda ATV sponsored by Town & Country of Warner Robins. A 30-gun raffle board will feature guns of all makes and models, and the Georgia Wildlife Federation Gun of the Year and the Camo Coalition Gun of the Year will also be raffled off. Many other items will be included in a silent auction, promising another exciting evening for everyone.

Only 450 tickets are available, so reserve your seat early. Single tickets are \$50, or you can sponsor a table of 10 for \$500. You will not want to miss this evening of fun, food and fellowship with other sportsmen and sportswomen. All proceeds benefit the Camo Coalition and will be used to advance the conservation efforts of the Georgia Wildlife Federation. For more information, contact Sam Stowe at 770-787-7887 or [sstowe@gwf.org](mailto:sstowe@gwf.org).

## Birding Volunteers

During 2007 the Georgia Wildlife Federation had two faithful volunteers tending to the bird feeders located around the Alcovy Conservation Center. Linda Costley works part time at the nearby Covington Athletic Club and finds time to enjoy the birds and trails at the ACC. A good friend, Fera Withrow, a Newton County Master Gardener, spends much time working on plant identification while tending the bird feeders. Both volunteers have performed invaluable work and do an excellent job keeping the feeders cleaned and full of seed or nectar for the hummingbirds.



Left to right: Diane Duke, Pat King and Linda Costley. Not pictured Fera Withrow.

In 2007 Emily Blizzard, a University of Georgia intern, refurbished a number of the bluebird houses and added some new ones to establish the ACC Bluebird Trail. Emily also cleaned and painted enough gourds to put up a Purple Martin pole at the edge of the wetland and power line right-of-way.

This year the volunteer group has grown. Two more volunteers have joined Linda and Fera caring for the feeders at the ACC. We welcome Diane Duke of Oxford. Diane just completed her Master Gardener certification and will be putting in her required service hours in Newton County, hopefully much of that at ACC. Pat King of Conyers also completed her Master Gardener course and enjoys the ACC trails while assisting with the bluebird monitoring.

The Bluebird Trail is monitored every Thursday at 1:00 during the nesting season. If you would like to be included in the fun, call Robert Phillips at 770-787-7887. 🍷

## EPA Teams with GWF

By Robert Phillips, Volunteer Coordinator

On February 27, 2008 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region IV met at the Alcovy Conservation Center in Covington, Georgia. The



mission of the U.S. EPA is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment — air, water, and land — upon which life depends. That's not so different from the mission of the Georgia Wildlife Federation. Region IV ranges all across the S.E., Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. We were fortunate to have them come together at our state headquarters, because despite windy and cold weather (a high of 37 degrees), all 19 EPA staffers took time out to volunteer for some outside work. The EPA volunteers removed fencing and a couple of old amphibian monitoring sites. I wasn't sure if their zest for the work came from their love of being outdoors or if they just worked quickly so they could get back inside where it was warm. Either way, GWF appreciates their time. It was a job well done. 🍷

*Jekyll.....continued from page 8*

including Virginia chain ferns and red maples, some of which are over 3 feet in diameter and 40 feet tall. Maritime forests serve several important functions. They provide critical wildlife habitat, stabilize the island, and protect against storm surges and hurricanes. These forests and wetlands are highly unique to our barrier islands and must not be destroyed for residential development.

GWF will be closely examining LLC's next development plans to ensure that the cultural, ecological, and aesthetic value that has made Jekyll so unique for decades is not jeopardized for short-term, private gains. We encourage all of our members to do the same. Please take advantage of the public comment period once the new plans are unveiled. Jekyll Island belongs to you! 🍷

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**We gratefully  
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those whose gifts  
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our mission.**

#### **Workplace Giving**

We gratefully acknowledge all employees who contributed to GWF through their Earth Share of Georgia workplace giving campaigns.

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#### **Adopt-a-Stream**

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#### **State Wildlife Action Plan**

National Wildlife Federation

### **Gifts received in honor:**

**Mrs. Lessie Smithgall**  
North Georgia Community  
Foundation

**Terry Tatum**  
Boxwood Garden Club

### **Gifts received in memory:**

**In Memory of James Hayes**  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert M. Kesterton

**In Memory of Dr. Jason Speir**  
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We have taken great care to present an accurate and complete listing of our supporters. If an omission or other error has occurred, we express our sincere regret and ask that it be brought to our attention.

*Acuity Team.....continued from page 1*

Under threatening skies Shirl Parsons, GWF's Conservation Issues Coordinator, briefed the group concerning the importance of SWAP and the five priority actions as they relate to the ecoregions of Georgia. While some of the privet could be removed by hand, some of the Acuity Green Team learned to use a Weed Wrench to pull the larger plants. Privet is an aggressive plant and spreads from root sprouts as well as from the copious seeds that are widely disbursed by feeding and migrating birds. In bottomland forests privet can become so thick it shades out all other species. (For the proper disposal or treatment of any invasive species, check with the Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council at [www.gaepc.org](http://www.gaepc.org).)

While working along Cornish Creek Trail, GWF Volunteer Coordinator Robert Phillips described the importance of a good stream buffer to water quality. The GWF partners with Newton County to protect stream buffers along the Alcovy Greenway and uses Adopt-a-Stream protocol to monitor ten streams within the County. Robert encouraged the Acuity Green Team to come back to help monitor Cornish Creek. 🐾

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**July 12:** Wetland Monitoring Workshop at Mill Creek Nature Center. Volunteers learn about wetlands, plant identification and how to monitor wetlands. Monitoring takes place 4 times a year at MCNC. High School students - Adults. Time: TBD. Contact Christina at 770-868-8423 or cmarr@gwf.org.

**July 31 - Aug 3:** Atlanta Buckarama®, Atlanta Expo Center. See page 3 for details. Volunteers needed.

**Aug 15-17:** Perry Buckarama®, Georgia Agricenter. See page 3 for details. Volunteers needed.

**Aug 9:** Adopt-A-Stream Monitoring of Cornish Creek, Alcovy Conservation Center, 12 noon.

**Aug 28:** Sportsman's Dinner & Auction. See page 8 for details.

**Sept 27:** Junior & Cadette Girl Scout "Wetlands Patch" program at Mill Creek. 9am-12pm. Call 770-868-8423 or cmarr@gwf.org to register.

**Oct 4:** Intro to Adopt-A-Stream, Alcovy Conservation Center. 10am.

**Oct 11:** River's Alive, Alcovy Conservation Center and Mill Creek Nature Center. More details to come.

**Oct 25:** Biological Adopt-A-Stream Workshop, Alcovy Conservation Center. 10am.

**Nov 8:** Chemical Adopt-A-Stream Workshop, Alcovy Conservation Center. 10am.

**Nov 8:** Adopt-A-Stream Monitoring of Cornish Creek, Alcovy Conservation Center, Call 770-787-7887 to register. 12 noon.

**Nov 15:** Junior Girl Scout "Wildlife" badge program 9am-12pm. Call 770-868-8423 or cmarr@gwf.org to register.

*For more information on GWF Volunteer opportunities at the Alcovy Conservation Center, call 770-787-7887 or email rphillips@gwf.org.*

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