

Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

November 2008 - January 2009



John Coffey captured these beautiful winter scenes while blazing the Songbird Trail on Grassy Mountain.



November – **Troy and Wanda Brown** kicked off the month clearing blowdowns off of the Hickory Creek Trail...**Geri Geren, David Smith and Barry Gilley** cleared debris off of the Pinhoti Trail at Pilcher's Pond...**North GA SORBA's** own **Bill Hester** spent 3 days cutting blowdowns off the Pinhoti Trail in preparation for the Snake Creek Gap Mountain BikeTime Trials. **Debra Hester** swamped for Bill one day and **Conrad Fernandez** joined in another day...on one super Saturday, **Kit Dameron, Gail Kirkman, Jeremy Simpson and Mary Mills** with the **Ellijay Chapter of SORBA** trimmed and cleared debris off of Pinhoti #2, **Susan Shedd** performed regular maintenance of the Jacks River Fields Campground, and **Bob Korch, Jim Bishop, Amos Burrell, Troy and Wanda Brown** tackled blowdowns on the Beech Bottom Trail including work on the huge, forked-top red oak blowdown near the river...the next day, **Mark Voykovic** accomplished wilderness user contacts in the Beech Bottom/Jacks River Falls area spreading the word about Leave-No-Trace. He also cleared debris from the Jacks River Trail while on his foot patrol...**Fred Pilcher** took on trash removal at the Keown Falls Trailhead and other recreation sites over a 2 day period...**Wanda Brown** was a big help to update the TEAM Conasauga Yahoo website...**Troy Brown** spent a day sharpening tools for the upcoming trail workday...then, on a cold, miserable weather day, **TEAM Conasauga** had one of its biggest volunteer turn-outs in years when hikers and equestrians with **Backcountry Horsemen of North GA** joined forces to knock out heavy maintenance on some 150 waterbars on the Penitentiary Branch Trail. Dedicated volunteers included **Jim Bishop, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Troy and Wanda Brown, Joe, Gabriella, Sharon and Tommy Burk, Amos Burrell, Dewey Campbell, Bob Elkenberry, Martha Fillingham, Molly Ford, Kathy Hansen, Jim Holland, Scott Jordan, Bob and Mary Korch, Junior Kyle, Carlos and Carol Martel, Bruce Oliver, Tom Owens, Jerry Phurrough, Bruce and Susan Shedd, Mike Shyer, Melinda Towe, Carol Upshaw, and Larry Wheat.** What a crowd!...that same weekend **Charlie Crider and Gail**



Milner returned to their home away from home at the Cottonwood Patch Horse Camp and worked hard 2 days clearing blowdowns off of the Horseshoe Bend Trail and the Iron Mountain Trail...**Fred Pilcher** mowed at Pilcher's Pond and the Johns Mountain Overlook 1 day, then returned to pick up trash at several locations on the west side of the district...**Mac McArthur** helped with trash pickup on the east side...**Berry College** students organized a National Forest clean-up day along Johns Creek and the Pocket...**Chris Hohol and Bill Hester** continued their pre-race blowdown removal work on the Pinhoti Trail...**Larry Wheat** painted and GPS mapped new trail locations for the new trail system at Dry Creek...and **Troy and Wanda Brown** gave their crosscut saw a workout clearing blowdowns from the Hickory Creek Trail to finish out the month. **TEAM Conasauga** volunteers contributed **487 hours** this month. Thanks everyone for a fantastic job!

A large number of BCHNG equestrians contributed to the success of the Penitentiary Branch Work Day

December – **Fred Pilcher** removed litter from the Pinhoti Trailhead and access road at Dry Creek to start things off...**Troy and Wanda Brown** returned to the Hickory Creek Trail to continue the blowdown removal work they started last month...**Wanda Brown** updated our volunteer website...**John Coffey** installed plastic blazers on the Murray's Lake Trail over a 2 day period...**Bill Hester** removed graffiti at the Pinhoti Trailhead at Snake Creek Gap. **Bill** returned the following week to finish removing the vandalism...**Fred Pilcher** worked 2 days on litter patrol along the Johns Mountain, Keown Falls, Bowater and Dry Creek Roads...**John Coffey and Sidney Perdue** began installing blazers on the scenic Emery Creek Trail...**Bill Hester, Patrick Hohol and Chris Hohol** of North GA SORBA continued chainsaw clearing of blowdowns from the timed trial section of the Pinhoti Trail...**Fred Pilcher** repaired footbridges in the Pocket Picnic Area over a 2 day period...**Linda Norton** removed blowdowns from the Sumac Creek Trail...**Larry Wheat and Carolyn Rand** continued the trail painting and mapping project at Dry Creek...and finally, **Troy and Wanda Brown** were back at it on the Hickory Creek Trail making short work of the blowdowns there. December is a busy month, but volunteers found time to give **92.5 valuable hours** to the cause. We surely appreciate it.

January - January 1st was an active day for TEAM Conasauga. **Bob and Mary Korch and Jim Bishop** spent New Year's Day on the Murray's Lake Trail trimming and slingblading...**John and Rene Coffey and Sidney Perdue** decided to enjoy January 1st blazing the Emery Creek Trail...And, **Linda and Richard Norton** celebrated the holiday by using their packstock to remove some 200 lbs. of trash and discarded camping gear from the Beech Bottom area...**Amy and Gene Findley** helped **Larry Wheat** with the blazing of the new trails at Dry Creek. The trio returned a few weeks later to resume the big project...**Mark Voykovic** assisted by **Jeff Johnson and Chad Raszler** removed fire rings and talked with visitors about the importance of Leave-No-Trace (LNT) in the Jacks River Falls/Beech Bottom area. They also cleared some blowdowns and debris off the Jacks River Trail below the Falls...**Bill and Debra Hester** were hard at it clearing blowdowns and limbs from the Pinhoti Trail from the Snake Creek Gap Trailhead to Middle Mountain 1 day, then from Dug Gap Mountain to England Springs Gap another day. **Bill and Debra** returned over a 2-day period to finish the Pinhoti clearing from Stover Creek to Hurricane Mountain...**Wanda Brown** contributed some administrative time to update the volunteer website...Icy roads changed the trail maintenance game plan for **Working Weekend #52**. However, in spite of some difficulties getting to the trail on Friday and a (mostly) rain-out event on Saturday, TEAM Conasauga volunteers were still able to maintain numerous erosion control dips on the Iron Mountain Trail and saw out blowdowns at the beginning of the Hickory Creek Trail. Volunteers who braved the weather to attend included **Jim Bishop, Troy and Wanda Brown, Amos Burrell, Helen Chamberlain, John and Rene Coffey, Charlie Crider, Gail Milner, Sue Gilfillan, Larry Jones, and Jerry Phurrough**...**Bob Korch and Jim Bishop** rounded out the month with some serious digging to restore the water dips on the south end of the Hickory Creek Trail. Thanks TEAM for your **228 hours** of volunteer time this month.



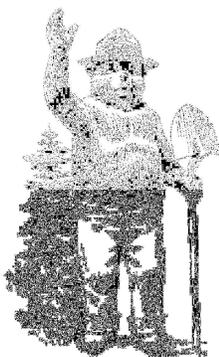
*Rain, sleet, or snow can't stop this crew....
Working Weekend #52*



The Conasauga Ranger District Volunteer Program has an outstanding accident record with only a few minor nicks and bruises in its 18+ year history. I owe this to you and your constant attention to safety. Simply put...we do what we do safely or it doesn't get done. Here are some reminders for the use of sharp-edged tools:



- **Treat all tools with respect.** Pulaskis, rakes, shovels, loppers, slingblades, axes and saws can all have razor sharp edges. Use caution, use the tool correctly, and you should stay accident free.
- **Always wear gloves.** When removing and placing guards on tools, wear gloves to protect your hands. Probably more people get cut on the thumbs and fingers while removing tool guards without gloves than actually having accidents while using the tools.
- **Transport tools in a safe manner.** While hiking or riding to and from the work site, carry your tool at your side or in front of you with two hands. Avoid carrying tools on your shoulder. Carry tools to your downhill side when hiking down a trail. That way, if you slip and fall, the tool can be dropped away from you. The same applies when crossing streams...carry the tool to the downstream side.
- **Work a safe distance from other trail workers.** Make sure you have ample room to swing pulaskis and slingblades. Talk to one another in order to keep the area safe. Stop working when others are passing by you. And, before you pass, make sure your presence is known.
- **Keep tool handles dry.** If tool handles or gloves get wet, realize that your work day may be over. Slick tool handles can be very difficult to hold on to.
- **Know your limits.** Fatigue often plays a role in accidents. Don't be too macho to take a break or quit for the day. Know when to stop and say, "that's enough for today".
- **Never run with a tool.** If you disturb a yellowjacket nest or encounter other stinging insects, drop the tool immediately and leave the scene at a run. After the nest calms down or bee/wasp spray is used, you can go back and retrieve your tool.
- **Above all, use good judgment, common sense and THINK SAFETY FIRST!**



Please Be Careful!

CONASAUGA LORE...

Many of you ask about the origin of place names on the National Forest. Here is some interesting information about one location on the district, Pilchers Pond.

The history of the Pilcher family in Northwest Georgia

The original pioneer Pilcher family migrated to Walked County, Georgia in 1845 from the York District in South Carolina. They settled on land which borders to the west on what is now the Pocket Road, and to the east by the Gordon County line on top of Horn Mountain. Federal census takers frequently counted them in Gordon County.

The pioneer family numbered seven in all. The husband and father was James Edward Pilcher III born in 1788 in the Yadkin River Valley of North Carolina. The wife and mother was Elizabeth McSwain Pilcher of the York District in South Carolina. The oldest child was John W. Pilcher, born in 1822 in South Carolina, followed by George, Daniel, Nancy, Katherine, Thomas William, and the youngest, Samuel. John W. was killed in 1862 at the battle of Second Manassas in Virginia. Thomas and Samuel returned to the area after the Civil War and raised large families.

Nothing remains on the original homesite except the family graveyard. The property is now a part of the Chattahoochee National Forest, Conasauga Ranger District. The U.S. Forest Service constructed a pond in the mid-1990s and named it Pilchers Pond in honor of the family who



lived there. A Forest Service volunteer from Villanow, Fred Pilcher helps to maintain the site and keep it well groomed and litter free. Fred is the great-grandson of Samuel Pilcher who is buried in the family cemetery.

* History provided by Thomas Edward Pilcher Sr., grandson of Thomas William Pilcher

The old Pilcher's homesite stays well groomed thanks to Fred Pilcher



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Infestation Spreads to the Cohuttas

The hemlock woolly adelgid, a non-native insect, is killing the two eastern US species of native hemlock trees, the Carolina hemlock and the Eastern hemlock in Georgia. A native to Asia, it was introduced to the Pacific Northwest in the 1920s and to the eastern US in the early 1950s. Unlike the western hemlock, no natural resistance to the adelgid has been found in eastern hemlock trees and since the exotic pest lacks natural enemies, it has spread throughout the east.

If you've been to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park in the past few years, you've probably seen the effects. It was first discovered in Georgia in the Chattooga River gorge in 2002 and has since spread southward and westward across the Blue Ridge Divide crest. The adelgid finally reached the eastern flank of the Conasauga Ranger District in 2008 when it was discovered in the Cashes Valley area and on a single hemlock in the upper Conasauga River drainage in the Cohutta Wilderness.

The adelgid covers itself with a white, waxy "wool" which acts as a protective coating for the insect. Adelgid infestations are easily recognizable by the appearance of tiny "cotton balls" at the base of hemlock needles. The "wool" is most conspicuous on the undersides of branches from fall through spring. The insect feeds on the sap at the base of the needles causing the needles to change from deep green to grayish green, and then fall off. Without needles the tree starves to death usually within 3 – 5 years of the initial attack.



Hemlocks play an important role by providing deep shade along creeks, maintaining cool water critical to survival of trout and other cold water species. Without active intervention, the forecast is for 90% of existing hemlock to be dead within 5 to 10 years. While not all hemlock can be saved, the Chattahoochee National Forest is taking action to save as many trees as possible to maintain the viability of the hemlock species. Two types of treatment are being used to kill adelgids: the release of predatory beetles which feed exclusively on adelgids, and the application of insecticide that is either injected or buried in the soil at the base of the tree, or injected directly into the tree.

Should you discover evidence of the adelgid during your travels across the district, please let us know.



Conasauga Bits and Pieces

- **REI (Kennesaw) Presentation.** Join Larry Thomas, Ed Lang and Bob Korch on Sunday, March 22nd for a presentation on "Exploring the Conasauga" and volunteer recruitment. Conasauga District Trail Volunteers will be staffing an information booth to promote volunteerism. Bring a friend and show your support for TEAM Conasauga.
- **Volunteer chainsaw certification.** Are you an experienced chainsaw operator who would like to be certified by the Forest Service to operate a chainsaw for non-wilderness trail maintenance? We are considering conducting the training which would require the better part of two Saturdays, one day of classroom and one day in the field. If you are interested, please contact Ed Lang by e-mail (elang@fs.fed.us) or phone (706-695-6736 ext. 118).
- **TEAM Conasauga volunteers on the mend.** We have missed two of our veteran trail volunteers who have been absent from our ranks the past several months due to injury or illness. Mike Plochinski "Ski" and Linda Pringle while down are far from out... they both tell me they are eager to get back on the trails as soon as they can. If

you would like to contact them, here are their email addresses:

mikeski23@comcast.net and lindaprinple@bellsouth.net .

- **Grassy Mountain roads temporarily closed.** Grassy Mountain Forest Roads 68 (Potato Patch), 17 (West Cowpen) and 64 (3-Forks) have been temporarily closed to vehicles due to wet conditions and freezing and thawing weather which have damaged the roadbeds. The roads will be reopened once they dry out, but caution is advised as the roads will remain rutted until repairs can be made.
- **Fire Season is here.** When conditions are right, the Forest Service is presently conducting prescribed (controlled) burns to reduce fuel accumulations and improve wildlife habitat. A recent burn occurred in the Alaculsy Valley around the Cottonwood Patch Camping Area and Iron Mountain Trail. Other burns are planned for the area. While it doesn't seem like it with all the rain we are experiencing this year, we are into the wildfire season until the woods "green-up" in April. Be careful of your campfire and other outdoor burning.



Mark Your Calendars:

- **March 21** Panther Creek (hiking) Trail - waterbar maintenance
- **March 22** REI (Kennesaw) Forest Service volunteer presentation
- **April 25** Iron Mountain (multi-use) Trail – waterbar/dip maintenance
- **May 16** Working Weekend #53 – Ballfield Group Camp.
Tearbitches (hiking) Trail – trimming, waterbar maintenance
- **June 6** National Trails Day – Pinhoti (multi-use) Trail.
Multiple projects, multiple locations – to be announced
- **July 18** Hemptop (multi-use) Trail – slingblading.
Annual event with Benton MacKaye Trail Association
- **August 15** Chestnut Lead (hiking) Trail – slingblading/trimming/waterbars



Note: In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to find some volunteers who are interested in working independently or with a small group to tackle these projects and others.

- Volunteer(s) to trim lower Conasauga River Trail from Murray's Lake to the river.
- Volunteer(s) to trim upper Emery Creek Trail.

If you are interested, please contact Ed at 706-695-6736 x 118 or e-mail elang@fs.fed.us.



**Trail notes from a memorable volunteer workday:
Penitentiary Branch Trail, Nov. 15, 2008**

By Tom Blackwell

“Last Saturday was a great day to be in the Cohuttas. The road in to Dally Gap was covered in leaves on the way in. It sounded different. There was a big turnout of horse people (20 in all), some were there for the first time. It wasn’t raining when we started out, but by the time we got up on top we were in the clouds. The wind was howling in the trees and the rain felt solid on the windward side of your face. Then, we went on down Penitentiary Branch Trail to work the waterbars. Troy said that there were 150 of them total. First you work with your rain jacket on, then off, all day. Down there, the wind was light, but you could hear it singing in the trees up on the ridge. Speaking of hearing things, we heard pigs squealing one time down the slope. On the way out, it started sleeting heavily with the pieces nearly as big as a BB; it really pelted the hardhats. There was enough of it to half cover the leaves. From the high ridge, we could see across to where the sun broke through the clouds making a beautiful scene. There was still enough color in the forest to be beautiful. It was a great day and good memories were made.”