

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

All Thumbs

Divine Creation or Evolution? Maybe it's Divine Evolution or Evolutionary Creation. We probably all learned in school or National Geographic Magazine about fish that bred and lived the entire of their lives in caves where no light shined.

Around Towns
Dale Harmon



The absence of illumination rendered sight impossible. Over the eons, because there was no need for them, the fish became eyeless.

John and I met roughly half-way between Hiawassee, Towns County, GA and Charlotte, NC where our son and his family live, for the Great Kid Exchange. After transferring luggage and grandchildren into our car, we began Grandpa, Dale, Patrick and Audrey's Excellent Adventure. With no time restraint, we chose more back roads than expressways back to Towns County. As we neared home, the children were amazed by all the tree-lined roads we traveled. City kids don't often see Mother Nature-sown foliage. They know clear-cut tracts with strategically placed shrubs and trees.

Because we'd left early to gather our precious cargo, my drought-gasping plants were begging for mercy. I prepared a semi-healthy snack to occupy the youngsters while duty called and could be answered. After winning Round One of the ritual power fight with an evil garden hose, I began revival. Suddenly Audrey was at my side asking all sorts of questions about all kinds of things. I've been out of the kid business a long time and had forgotten the extent of their curiosity. (As an aside, until recently, Mayor Liz was the youngest person in my immediate neighborhood. We're now blessed with littles in the hood.)

Audrey spied a moss garden, complete with gnomes, and became taken with it. A q and a session ensued. She wanted to make a garden to take home. Watering done, we began to amass moss, rocks, and "what is that stuff" lichen. The just right dish, not too deep (moss has shallow roots) was procured and our little-Eden making commenced. We sited and re-sited tufts and sheets of moss, stones and greenish gray lichen until it was just right. "This is more fun than TV and video games," the kid said with such conviction, I believed her. Of course, her Dale went to "The Secret Gnome" stash for inhabitants of such a garden paradise. About that time Patrick ambled outside to ask if he could have ice cream. He complimented the garden masterpiece but to him there is nothing more fun than video games. Intravenous feeding, a bladder catheter, and two thumbs are all that's needed for a full and rich life. Oh, and techno devices***

Use 'em or lose 'em. I worry that eons from now kids will be manufactured with 10 thumbs, no fingers. As the grands were leaving, Patrick asked if he could make a garden during this next visit. Hope and inspiration spring eternal in the mountains. See you around Towns.

*** Divine Exaggeration was used.

Fire Prevention Week October 6th thru 12th

Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, the tragic 1871 conflagration that killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres.

RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



The fire began on October 8 but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9, 1871. According to popular legend, the fire broke out after a cow - belonging to Mrs. Catherine O'Leary - kicked over a lamp, setting first the barn, then the whole city on fire. Chances are you've heard some version of this story yourself; people have been blaming the Great Chicago Fire on the cow and Mrs. O'Leary for more than 130 years. The great fire almost certainly started near the barn where Mrs. O'Leary kept her five milking cows. But there is no proof that O'Leary was in the barn when the fire broke out - or that a jumpy cow sparked the blaze. Mrs. O'Leary herself swore that she'd been in bed early that night, and that the cows were also tucked in for the evening. While the Great Chicago Fire was the best-known blaze to start during this fiery two-day stretch, it wasn't the biggest. That distinction goes to the Peshtigo Fire, the most devastating forest fire in American history.

The fire, which also occurred on October 8th, 1871, and roared through Northeast Wisconsin, burning down 16 towns, killing 1,152 people, and scorching 1.2 million acres before it ended. Historical accounts of the fire say that the blaze began when several railroad workers clearing land for tracks unintentionally started a brush fire. Before long, the fast-moving flames were whipping through the area 'like a tornado,' some survivors said. It was the small town of Peshtigo, WI that suffered the worst damage. Within an hour, the entire town had been destroyed. The fires also changed the way that firefighters and public officials thought about fire safety. On the 40th anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire, the Fire Marshals Association of North America (today known as the International Fire Marshals Association), decided that the anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire should henceforth be observed not with festivities, but in a way that would keep the public informed about the importance of fire prevention.

In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation, and since 1922, Fire Prevention Week has been observed on the Sunday through Saturday period in which October 9 falls. According to the National Archives and Records Administration's Library Information Center, Fire Prevention Week is the longest running public health and safety observance on record. The President of the United States has signed a proclamation proclaiming a national observance during that week every year since 1925. "Hear the Beep Where You Sleep. Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm," provides an ideal opportunity to educate the public about the importance of having working smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. Plan Ahead! If a fire breaks out in your home, you may have only a few minutes to get out safely once the smoke alarm sounds. Everyone needs to know what to do and where to go if there is a fire. One-third of American households who made an estimate thought they would have at least 6 minutes before a fire in their home would become life-threatening. The time available is often less, and only 8% said their first thought on hearing a smoke alarm would be to get out! The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has announced "Not Every Hero Wears a Cape. Plan and Practice Your Escape!" as the theme for this year's Fire Prevention Week.

Frank Riley is the Executive Director of the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council. Check or website www.chestchattatred.org or www.appofac.org or on Facebook Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D.

None of our business, all of our concern

"It's none of our business," my wife said in response to my grumbling as we drove down the valley. I wasn't quite foolish enough to remind her that she had voiced similar complaints the day before.

Over the course of several days we had observed from a distance the progress of a man working on a piece of property that he had apparently lately acquired. He appeared to be in his late 60s, and we made up a story that he was recently retired and a newcomer to the area.

Over the course of several days, every favorite toy of the millennial male made an appearance, including a late model Kubota tractor with attachments and a Husqvarna chain saw and string trimmer. All these fine tools combined to transform a fallow creekside field returning to nature into a lawn to be mowed.

We'll pick up on the conversation we started last week and declare in no uncertain terms that what the man did with his field, short of burying toxic waste, was absolutely nobody's business but his own. But then he started playing with the banks of the creek.

First he sawed all the vegetation close to the ground. Next he burned several spots along the creek bank, using some kind of accelerant to start the fire. Apparently the shape of the creek was not pleasing enough to his eye, because he then dug along the banks with a backhoe to reshape the course of the creek.

If you've lived here long enough you will know that this is not the first creek in Towns county to be treated in this manner, and if you are at all conversant with Georgia's environmental laws you could find several violations in the preceding paragraph.

We're not here today to fight the "nobody's going to tell me what I can and can't do with my own property" battle. The ongoing struggle to maintain water quality and ecological health against the onslaught of profit oriented unregulated development is challenge enough, and we've made a lot of progress here on that front.

No, the problem at its root is one of perception, and if we can change that perception it would remove a lot of fuel from the economic fire that consumes mountain tops and destroys natural areas. While we may never be able to breach the self absorbed mind set that tops of the mountain blocking one person's view from the top of the mountain (and spoils everyone else's view of that mountain), perhaps we can chip away at the image of the manicured lawn as the highest and best use of a piece of land.

Let's begin by paying our respects to Alnus Serrulata, the humble Alder bush native to eastern North America and once quite common along the creek banks of our mountain counties. Alders are nitrogen fixing plants and they improve the soil wherever they grow. Their fibrous networks of roots stabilize the soil in wet areas, and many times in our own creek I've seen erosion by high water stopped in its tracks by mats of interlocking Alder roots.

Alders provide a much needed source of pollen for bees and native wasps early in the spring. Alder leaves provide shade for creeks and streams, keeping the water cooler for trout. With the demise of the eastern hemlock due to the woolly adelgid, the role of alders in the survival of trout is more important than ever.

Sadly, no trout will linger in the exposed waters of the creek passing through our neighbor's field. Without a proper vegetative cover, heavy rain and high water will erode the creek banks, and the water will run brown downstream from his property. The areas he reshaped with his backhoe may never stabilize, and like several creeks in our area, the addition of unsightly riprap or shot rock along the banks may be necessary.

All of this to recreate the heavily marketed image of unbroken undulations of manicured green. Americans are conditioned to see that image as beautiful and desirable, but it is such a shallow image, and one that ignores the true beauty of a healthy ecosystem.

It is the difference between a pallid complexion artfully concealed by makeup and the unadorned visage of a person with the radiant glow of good health.

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

The Middle Path
By: Don Perry
onthemiddlepath.com

Hunting Season and Big Hornets

Hunting is more than just a hobby or a pastime for many people. It is a way of life. Hunting is also an important part of conservation for natural areas and wildlife. The number of hunters in the U.S. has been in decline the last 5 decades. Since hunting season is here let's talk about why hunting is important and how it benefits conservation efforts. I'm also going to talk about European hornets because I've gotten several calls about them recently.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



In the early 1900s, wildlife populations were very low. Market hunting, over trapping, and invasive species pushed many native species of game to the brink of extinction. However, due to wildlife management many game species have had their populations brought back to flourishing. Most of the management is done by state agencies that rely heavily on sportsmen purchasing equipment and licenses to do their hunting. Even as the number of hunters in America continues to decline, hunters and anglers still contribute the most to conservation practices financially.

Hunters manage populations of wildlife that otherwise would be non-existent. Over-population of wildlife is a serious concern. Over-population of wildlife can lead to nutrition issues, disease, damaged ecosystems, and wildlife wandering into areas where they don't need to be. Over-population of deer is damaging to forests because deer will feed on tree saplings. With no young trees to come up and replace old, dying trees forests will diminish and turn into pastureland. This in turn will affect the food chain and watersheds. Disease is a concern as well because diseases from wildlife can spread to domesticated animals as well.

The European hornet is really big. They can be an inch and a half or larger. Sometimes they are confused with Giant Asian Hornets, because both are very large in size, but the giant Asian hornet has not been reported in the U.S. European hornets have black and yellow stripes, and sometimes a reddish color on their head.

They will defend their nest by stinging if anyone gets too close, and can sting repeatedly. They build large paper nests that are about 6 feet off the ground. Sometimes they will raid honeybee hives. A unique feature about them is that they will continue to work at night. Most hornets and wasps will decrease in activity at night, but that is not necessarily the case with these guys. They will be attracted to light at night. Usually they feed on large insects like grasshoppers, flies, and bees. If food becomes scarce they may move to fruit hanging on trees. They will also take bark from trees. If they take enough bark they will girdle a tree, which results in the tree dying.

If you encounter European hornets it's best to have a pest management company handle them. They are difficult to remove if you can't find the nest.

If you have questions about hunting season or European hornets contact your county Extension office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. For more information on hunting you can also go to gadnr.org.

On September 26, Union County Extension is hosting a Radon Education Program at 5:30 in the Union County Civic Center. Call 706-439-6030 or Email me to RSVP.

The Towns-Union Master Gardeners are having their annual Fall Plant Sale on September 28 at the Union County Farmers Market. Stop by to get some perennial plants that are adapted to our climate.



Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Every Wednesday	
	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Movers & Shakers	Sundance Grill	8 am
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Third Tuesday of each month:	
YH Plan Comm.	YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
	Third Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
Book Bunch & Lunch	Daniels Steakhouse	11:30 am
	Third Thursday of each month:	
Friendship Comm.	Clubhouse	6 pm
Republican Party	Civic Center	5:30 pm
	Third Saturday of each month:	
Goldwing Riders	Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
	Fourth Monday of each month:	
Red Cross DAT	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
	Fourth Tuesday of each month:	
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm

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Towns County Herald

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