

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Mallards Have Fun, Too

Linda and I have had the pleasure of living on my Grandfather's mid 1800s farm down on the Hiwassee River at Mountain Scene for the past 20 years. Time flies when you are having fun living like my ancestors did but with modern conveniences. This stretch of the Hiwassee (not Hiwassee as the DOT thinks) is one of the only natural stretches of the river left in Towns County.

This stretch is bordered by Mountain Laurel, Rhododendron, white pines, oaks, Buckeyes, and all the wild things that have lived here for all time, such as: White Tailed Deer, Raccoons, Possums, Coyotes, Rabbits, Snakes, all manner of birds, Otters, Beavers, Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, Bats, Hellbenders, Bears, Mallard Ducks, and many other critters that live in our forest.



RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director

Our Sunday afternoon routine, when it is warm, is to sit in the cold water at the Blue Hole and enjoy the peace and quiet of the nature all around us.

For a few hours, we are isolated from the rest of the world except for the occasional wild creature that passes by. One time, we saw a Bald Eagle fly up and land in a tree there.

Each year we see a pair of Mallard Ducks in the river in front of our house and soon we will see the babies swimming with Mama duck or Daddy duck depending on who has babysitting duty that day.

One day while we were relaxing in the Blue Hole, we saw a male Mallard floating down the river toward us. He swerved around us and continued bobbing down the whitewater rapids below the Blue Hole. Soon we saw him flying back up river and then here he came again bobbing the rapids.

The next Sunday, we looked up and saw the whole Mallard family, Mama Duck, Daddy Duck and 7 baby ducks floating down the river. They paused on the sandy beach where many souls have been baptized over the years, and soon continued their way bobbing down the whitewater rapids stopping on rocks as they floated down the river.

This bird family was having fun shooting the rapids on a hot August afternoon.

Ducks do know how to have fun!

Mallards have one of the most extensive breeding ranges of any duck in North America, up to extending across the northern third of the United States and up to the Bering Sea.

The highest mallard densities occur in the Prairie Pot-hole Region of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and North and South Dakota, with nests placed in upland habitat near wetlands on the ground. Female mallards lay an average of 9 eggs.

Mallards dabble to feed on seeds, rootlets and tubers of aquatic plants off swamp and river bottoms.

The mallard is the most common duck in the United States, with the greatest abundance between the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains.

Mallards winter throughout the United States, with the highest densities typically recorded during winter surveys along the Mississippi Flyway from Cape Girardeau, MO, to the Gulf of Mexico.

They also have the most extended migration period, which lasts from late summer to early winter. Mallards are found in a variety of habitats, including dry agricultural fields, shallow marshes, oak-dominated forested wetlands, and the Hiwassee River.

The Mallard is the ancestor of nearly all domestic duck breeds. Domestic ducks can be common in city ponds and can be confusing to identify—they may lack the white neck ring, show white on the chest, be all dark, or show oddly shaped crests on the head.

The widespread Mallard has given rise to several populations around the world that have changed enough that they could be considered separate species. The "Mexican Duck" of central Mexico and the extreme southwestern United States and the Hawaiian Duck both are closely related to the Mallard, and in both forms the male is dull like the female.

Mallard pairs form long before the spring breeding season. Pairing takes place in the fall, but courtship can be seen all winter. Only the female incubates the eggs and takes care of the ducklings, except for our duck family where Daddy has been seen babysitting.

Ducks are strong fliers; migrating flocks of Mallards have been estimated traveling at 55 miles per hour.

The standard duck's quack is the sound of a female Mallard. Males don't quack; they make a quieter, rasping sound. Mallards, like other ducks, shed all their flight feathers at the end of the breeding season and are flightless for 3-4 weeks.

They are secretive during this vulnerable time, and their body feathers molt into a concealing "eclipse" plumage that can make them hard to identify.

The oldest known Mallard was a male, and at least 27 years, 7 months old when he was shot in Arkansas in 2008. He had been banded in Louisiana in 1981.

For more information on wild things around us, contact your local Georgia DNR office or email ChestChatt RC&D at www.info.ccrd@gmail.com.

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, Hiwassee, 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.

Where's the Beef?

Last weekend I tried the much talked about "Beyond Burger." Here's my unofficial and entirely subjective review.

It tastes OK. Let me explain. "OK" is a step above "fine." "Fine" is what my wife and I say when the hard working server who has been friendly and courteous throughout our unremarkable meal asks how we liked the freezer burned entree and the cold mashed potatoes. We ate it because we were hungry and it wasn't bad enough to send back, but we leave a good tip and say the meal was "fine."

So yes, for my money the vegan burger is OK and I would buy it again to keep in the freezer for one of those quick lunches when nobody feels like cooking. The taste and texture are more reminiscent of meat than any of the soy or black bean based products I've tried, though its not going to fool even the most casual carnivore.

It's expensive. Two small patties sized somewhere between small burger and large sausage patty cost about 6 bucks. It has about the same calories and fat as beef, and a good dose of sodium. It's not going to lower your cholesterol because it delivers a sizable amount of coconut oil in the ingredients. It does have a wee bit of fiber, whereas your typical hamburger has none.

Contrary to the marketing campaign promoting the burger, it's not going to save the planet. Maybe it's a step in the right direction. After all, an acre of peas (pea protein is the primary ingredient in the Beyond Burger) will feed a lot more people than a single cow on that acre (if that cow is living in Florida). In most of the beef producing parts of the world it takes multiple acres to sustain a cow.

The fledgling vegan burger industry claims to produce a much smaller carbon footprint than modern industrial beef production. There are studies which back up that claim. But the highly processed burgers are being marketed as the "best" thing you can do for the environment, which simply isn't true. By the time you plant the peas, fertilize, harvest, transport and process the peas and then ship them to market, energy intensive activities which require fossil fuel to accomplish, the carbon footprint is going to be at least in the same zip code as beef. Add to that the energy required for the manufacture and transport of the 20 or so ingredients. Energy is also needed to recycle the paper used in the packaging, and the polypropylene used in the container derives from natural gas or the oil refining process. The amount of trash leftover from two small patties was notable.

Eating any form of processed food is certainly not the "best" thing we can do for the planet in our kitchens. Eating a plant dominant diet, as much as possible from local sources, or making black bean burgers at home, or buying locally produced grass fed beef, are all superior in terms of environmental impact and energy use to buying processed food.

For example, White Oak Pastures in Bluffton, GA, commissioned a Life Cycle Assessment study of their sustainable beef production, which incidentally uses techniques much closer to those practiced by our ancestors. The study indicated that their beef production was actually carbon negative, which challenges the current narrative about beef production.

As for the recent excitement over the vegan burger industry, as a die hard supporter of free enterprise, I'll have to admit that there's nothing intrinsically wrong with a clever product and a brilliant marketing campaign. If it's a worthwhile product, the market will embrace it. If not, the market will move on to embrace something else. As always, buyer beware. Free enterprise is not guaranteed to be happy enterprise.

Now if you're trying to be a vegetarian for health or spirit reasons and you're still tempted by the food humans have consumed for 40,000 years, this could be your burger. It really does taste pretty good, and it is somewhat healthier than a lot of fast food. If you're looking for a virtue burger to impress virtuous friends who aren't really into numbers or thermodynamics, then this could be your burger too. If you're looking for a virtue burger and you would like to help pump up the stock of a virtue burger manufacturer, then this is definitely your burger.

My takeaway is that you can eat the Beyond Burger, if you can afford it, and feel some virtue, or you can eat locally produced grass fed beef, if you can afford it, and feel virtuous as well. Or you could eat what you want, keeping in mind that "virtue" is not a zero sum equation, and your virtue does not depend on someone else being less virtuous. Unfortunately that's not how our culture is currently being programmed.

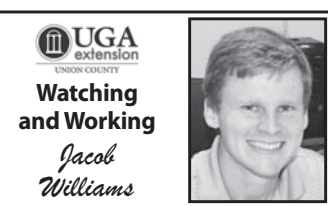
Alas, if only life could be that simple, but in the age of induced and aggravated partisanship, everything we do has to have some kind of political spin. Therefore, if you're still determined to save the planet, I recommend waiting for the launch of the new "Soylent Solution." It's a great way to reduce carbon across the board. Soylent Red will be made from recycled Conservatives: Tastes great but tends to pack on the pounds and harden the arteries. Soylent Blue derives from recycled Liberals: Pretty tasty if you add enough hot sauce, but you'll be starving by the next meal. My favorite is Soylent Gray, made from the recycled Boomer generation accused of destroying the planet. A word of warning, however. Soylent Gray contains a lot of preservatives.



The Middle Path
By: Don Perry
onthemiddlepath.com

GFC Dirty Dozen

Every year the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) comes out with a dirty dozen list. This list contains 12 nonnative invasive plants in Georgia. The plants are ranked by the number of acres that they occupy in the state. Let's go through the list and talk about which ones are prevalent here.



UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

Number 1 is nonnative privet. Privet is found in many places. It is a voracious grower. It's in the olive family so in the spring it will have small white flowers with four petals. The seed is spread by wildlife. You'll often see on the edge of wooded areas because it needs at least partial sun to grow.

Number 2 is Nepalese browntop. Some people call this one Japanese stiltgrass. This one is a big concern in the mountains. It is a concern here because it is capable of growing in shaded areas. This means that it has the potential to take over clearings in the woods. In the woods it may not be noticed as often because it a grass and grows on the forest floor.

Number 3 is chinaberry. This is an ornamental tree. It is poisonous to humans, some livestock, and pets. I have not seen much of it in the mountains.

Number 4 is nonnative lespedeza. Lespedeza has been used food plots and erosion control. DOTs will sometimes use it on steep roadside banks. It does have high forage quality. I have not seen a lot of this one around here.

Number 5 is kudzu. Kudzu is a vine that grows over trees, choking them out. Killing kudzu is not an easy task, it takes persistence. You can often see kudzu while driving down the road. It will take over entire stands of trees. Originally, it was brought to the U.S. for erosion control.

Number 6 is Chinese tallowtree. It is a fast growing tree planted for ornamental use. The leaves and fruit are toxic to humans and cattle. It produces up to 100,000 seeds in a year that birds spread.

Number 7 is Japanese climbing fern. This plant spreads by spores. It is capable of climbing trees and covering them, similar to kudzu. This is another one that I haven't seen.

Number 8 is nonnative olive, which includes autumn olive. We have autumn olive. It produces small red berries with grey specks. The underside of the leaves are a silvery white color. This plant is also able to outcompete native plants.

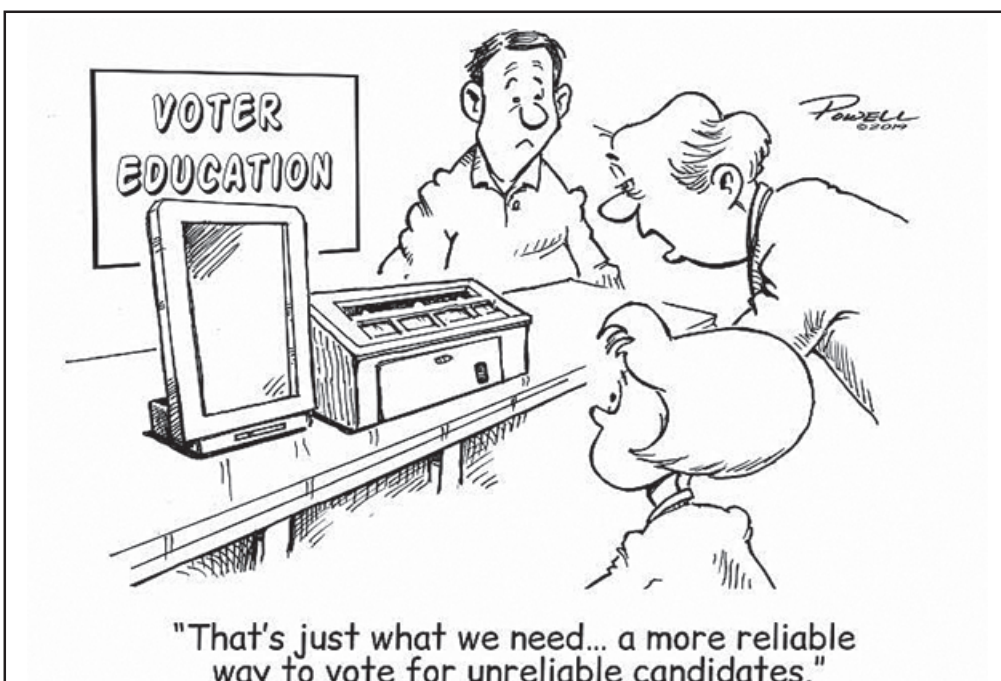
Number 9 is English ivy. English ivy is planted around homes as a ground cover. It readily spreads beyond where it's planted. Some alternatives for ground cover are Canadian wild ginger and Appalachian Barren Strawberry.

Number 10 is mimosa. Mimosa is often seen along roadsides. When it's in bloom, you can easily identify it by its fluffy pink flowers.

Number 11 is trifoliate orange. This is a new entry to the dirty dozen list. It is also called hardy orange. It is in the citrus family and is able to survive our cold temperatures unlike other citrus. Usually it is used as an ornamental for hedges. The fruit on it is extremely sour and full of seeds, so it's not very edible.

Number 12 is wisteria. Wisteria is common around Atlanta, but I have not seen very much here. It grows similar to kudzu, with beautiful purple flowers. There is a native alternative for wisteria.

If you have questions about identifying or controlling any of the dirty dozen contact your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



Towns County Community Calendar

| | Every Monday: | |
|--------------------|--|----------|
| Bridge Players | All Saints Lutheran | 12:30 pm |
| Free GED prep. | Old Rec. Center | 4 pm |
| Alcoholics Anon. | Sharp UMC (Men) | 7 pm |
| | Every Wednesday | |
| Alcoholics Anon. | Hiwassee UMC | Noon |
| SMART Recovery | 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 Monday of each month: | |
| Hospital Auxiliary | Cafeteria | 1:30 pm |
| Planning Comm. | Civic Center | 6 pm |
| MOAA | Michael email mva62sgn@brmcmc.net | |
| | 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 |

Have something to sell?

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