

MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION TRUST

Newsletter Vol. 8, Issue 3

Winter 2006

Fun For Everyone at the 9th Annual MCT Meeting and Picnic



all is a spectacular season in the North Georgia Mountains and the weather couldn't have been more perfect for the Mountain Conservation Trust's 9th Annual Meeting and Picnic. Cody Laird's home in the Tate Mountain Estates served as the idyllic setting for the festivities, providing an intimate atmosphere while offering breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and Lake Sequoyah.



Lynnell Reese proudly displays her new medal to former Executive Director, Barbara Decker

More than 200 members of the Trust trekked up the mountain to enjoy the day's events. Three hikes were scheduled, each exploring a different part of Burnt Mountain. One group strolled around the lake at Tate Mountain Estates led by Jim Smith, another followed Don Wells through the new interpretive trail in the Burnt Mountain Preserve, and the third ventured down the mountain with Robert Keller, and then climbed more than 400 feet back to the top. Once back at the picnic site, participants could visit with artisans from the Appalachian Heritage Guild who were present to demonstrate their crafts and skills. They could watch blacksmithing, sewing with a pedal powered sewing machine, wood turning with a treadle lathe, spinning wool, and traditional book binding.

The guest speaker this year was Curt Soper, recently appointed by Governor Sonny Perdue as manager of the Georgia Land Conservation Program. This is a position on behalf of the Land Conservation Council as created under the Land Conservation Act of 2005. He discussed the importance of preserving and conserving the land and other natural resources in Georgia, especially at this time of rapid growth. Many incentives are available to encourage property owners to place their land in permanent conservation easements, which is significant since ninety-three percent of the land in Georgia is privately owned. This is an important task since Georgia is the fifth most biologically diverse state and the fifth fastest growing. Mr. Soper also stressed that conservation is important to not only maintain the scenic beauty, but to also protect drinking water and plant diversity, to minimize flood damage and erosion, and to provide recreational opportunities.



Curt Soper addressing the crowd at the Annual Meeting and Picnic.

Great strides have been taken in North Georgia to preserve land in the region, but there is still a lot to be done!

A delicious meal followed the lecture. Dishes were prepared by Jasper Family Steakhouse and pork was provided

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The Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia is dedicated to the permanent conservation of the natural resources and scenic beauty of the mountains and foothills of North Georgia through land protection, collaborative partnerships and education.

Letter from The President

As we near the end of 2006, let's look back and review what the Mountain Conservation Trust has done this year. We started the year off by employing our first full-time executive director, Dr. Robert Keller. Dr. Keller has brought an amazing amount of energy and new ideas to the Trust and has reenergized the Board. Judging by the level of participation in the numerous events hosted by the Trust during the year, many of our members have been reenergized, too. Moreover, we have added more new members in 2006 than in any recent year.

The Trust is dedicated to the permanent conservation of the natural resources and scenic beauty of the mountains and foothills of North Georgia through three mechanisms—land protection, collaborative partnerships, and education. Led by Dr. Keller, the Trust has made significant gains in all three areas. For example, in the area of land protection several conservation easements are working their way toward fruition, two individuals have decided to donate their land to the Trust, and more landowners than ever have contacted the Trust to learn about protecting their land via conservation easements and other tools. In the area of education, the Trust led the effort and provided the materials for the new outdoor classroom on Long Swamp Creek behind the Pickens County High School, conducted nature hikes and educational programs for our members and others, and worked with the Mountain Stewards and Pickens County to open the first interpretive trail at the Burnt Mountain Preserve. In the area of collaborative partnerships, the Trust has become an important source of biological and geographical information for local governments and land owners, continued to work with Pickens County toward the preservation of the Long Swamp Creek corridor, and partnered with a group at Big Canoe in an effort to locate and save the hemlocks in that community from certain death caused by an insect already killing the hemlocks in the mountains to our north. These are but a few examples of the many positive activities that are occurring.

There is still a lot more to be done, however. As seems inevitable, more and more of the rural land around us is being converted to high density residential or commercial use and much of the natural beauty that keeps or brought many of us to the mountains is being lost. Can we save it all? No. Can we work together to conserve the most important areas and to guide the development of the rest to best protect the natural resources and scenic beauty we all treasure? Yes. To do so, however, takes time, energy, and money. Get involved. Talk to our local officials and your neighbors. Volunteer your time and money to the Trust or other like minded organizations. It sounds trite but we can make a difference if we make the effort now. Tomorrow, or next year, may be too late. 🐾

Mark Dickerson
President



“Annual Picnic...”
(continued from page 1)

by Sequatchie Cove Farms and cooked by Rick and Bob Jasperse. Two hundred people can generate a large amount of garbage, but not this year! As a conservation organization, an extra effort was made to reduce waste; everything at the event was either compostable or recyclable. North Georgia Recycling hauled the cans, cardboard, and glass to a recycling facility. The plates were made of begasse (sugar cane fiber), the cups of PLA (corn), and the cutlery of potato starch,

all of which were thrown in the compost bin with the food scraps, taken to a member's property, and disposed of in an outdoor composting pit. The picnic-wear will biodegrade in 180 days in a commercial composting facility, so it is being studied and analyzed outdoors to monitor the decomposition process. It is hypothesized that the pile will be completely composted within a year, just in time to be refilled with the compost from the 10th Annual Meeting and Picnic. 🐾

Conservancy News

Conservation Speakeasy

Social activities are an integral part of maintaining a sense of community within a group, and MCT Executive Director



Folks conversing and snacking at Pendley Creek Stables.

Robert Keller has developed this terrific series of events under the title of Conservation Speakeasy. Members are invited to come snack, drink, and shmooze. Lecturers are invited to come and share with the group, and to date participants have learned about the woolly adelgid, wild boars, and the indigenous darters. Speakers include Lou Sillay of Big Canoe, Dr. Robert Keller, and Dr. Steven Powers from Reinhardt College.

Lou Sillay is leading a Hemlock mapping program in Big Canoe to help locate and protect these vulnerable trees. He spoke at the first Speakeasy, held at the Fireside Pub in the Foothills Shopping Center. The woolly adelgid is beginning its invasion of the southeast, so it is our responsibility to do all we can to help save the Eastern Hemlock.



Members enjoying the beautiful patio weather at the Fireside Pub and Grill.

Dr. Robert Keller spoke at the October Speakeasy, held at Pendley Creek Stables near Grandview Lake. While earning his PhD, Dr. Keller wrote a dissertation on the destructive habits of the wild boar in the Smoky Mountains and throughout the Southeast. His presentation illustrated the impact of this non-native species on our forests and helped participants understand the extreme effects one animal can have on an entire ecosystem.

Dr. Steven Powers, an Assistant Professor of Biology at

Reinhardt College in Waleska, served as the guest lecturer at the November event at Pendley Creek Stables. His area of expertise is the darter in the Upper Tennessee River Drainage. Dr. Powers explained the precarious situation of this species due to human manipulations such as dams and residential development. He detailed some of the options available to help save the darter, described the genetic variation depending on geographic location, and showed photos of these marvelous fish.

At each event, participants have the opportunity to socialize before and after the lectures to help build a greater sense of



Dr. Steven Powers explaining the darter situation in the Southeast.

community among the MCT members. We are much more than simply a conservation organization! Come join us!

Dr. Keller is planning to host a Speakeasy each month, so please contact us with ideas, suggestions, or if you know a potential lecturer. See you next month!

An Evening on Grandview

MCT members and prospective members from the Grandview Lake area gathered at the Grandview Clubhouse on October 26th.

This was the first of a series of social events being organized for the different



Guests warming themselves by the fire on this fabulous fall evening at Grandview.

'neighborhoods' represented in the Trust's membership. Participants gathered for snacks, beverages, and conversation, chatting with old friends and meeting new ones.

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"Nature is painting for us, day after day, pictures of infinite beauty." --John Ruskin

“Oh, the Places You’ll Go!”

By

Robert D. Keller, Ph.D

“Oh...the places you’ll go!” Sally Field’s character read that line from Dr. Seuss’ book to her young son in the movie “Forrest Gump”. In response to her recited dialog, he replied inquisitively “What’s my destiny, Mama?” To that, she put aside the book, gazed intently into her son’s eyes, and uttered the now classic line “Life is like a box of chocolates, Forrest.....You never know what you’re gonna get.”

About this time last year, I might as well have been young Forrest. I was beginning a new life at one of those “places you’ll go”, and I had absolutely no idea what I was “gonna get”. Jasper, Georgia, huh? I’m somewhat chagrined to admit it now, but I had never heard of the place. I drove into town that very first morning without the slightest inkling of what was in store for me. For some reason, as I drove down Main Street that very first day, I had a flashback to my teenage years. It was just like meeting the parents of my date for the first time. A slow, creeping feeling of dread must have come over me with that thought! But as I rounded the small curve up by the Old Jailhouse, and crested the small rise coming into town, my angst seemed to melt away. Instead of being met with the forced politeness of an uncomfortable first meeting, Jasper seemed to take on the persona of an old childhood friend.

I grew up in a place eerily similar to Jasper. It was a little dot of a town named Mt. Holly, North Carolina. The big city of Charlotte was one county over, but it might as well have been a world away. Mt. Holly was the kind of place where the train tracks passed right through the middle of downtown. I still remember that lonesome sound of the train blowing its whistle as it warily passed through town in the middle of the night. Like present day Jasper, the Mt. Holly of the 60’s snored contentedly as the rest of the world bustled around it.

All of downtown Mt. Holly could be found no more than a couple hundred yards from that intersection of those railroad tracks and Main Street. Like Jasper, the true charm of Mt. Holly lay in its little downtown area. The Mount Holly that I remember had a hardware store, named Massey’s; a grocery store, the A & P; a small movie theater, affectionately known as the Gaston Rat; a small newspaper, the Mt. Holly News; and three drug stores: Holland’s, Summey’s and Charlie’s.

While the Mt. Holly of yesteryear didn’t have the modern day equivalent of what one might consider a restaurant, each of the drug stores did have a small luncheon counter. Around noon everyday, the entire citizenry

of Mt. Holly circulated in and out of one of the three drug stores. My favorite lunch spot was Holland’s. They had one of those old steam tables.....the ones with the pump handle.....where they’d spruce up their hotdogs. Mmmmmm.....chili & slaw! And not that kind of chili with the beans either. Good old watery Hormel hotdog chili. How funny it is that the hotdogs seemed to taste better, the sun seemed to be brighter, and the people seemed to be more genuine in that little dinky town.

I left Mt. Holly right after high school. I was itching to see what the rest of the world had to offer. The world, I soon realized, moved a whole bunch faster than did my old home town. While Mt. Holly snored, the rest of the world burned with intensity. I left and never looked back. Several years after my departure, I remember that my mother had received a forwarded piece of mail for me announcing my tenth high school class reunion. She sent it to me half way across the world in the northeastern provinces of Thailand. Upon its arrival, I was somewhat amused to find my name in the “Where are they now?” category. Somehow this struck me as insanely funny as I huddled under my jungle poncho and tried unsuccessfully to stay dry during the monsoon season.

About ten years ago, I went back to Mt. Holly. That sleepy little town of my childhood woke up! Where once were drug stores now offices stood. The movie house was gone as was the hardware store. Fast food restaurants had sprung up everywhere. If it weren’t for the railroad tracks, I wouldn’t have recognized the place at all. It’s funny how once upon a time when I thought of my little hometown, I used to picture those old stores and the way that I remembered it as a child. Now when I think of Mt. Holly, I have this feeling that I’ve attended a funeral for an old friend who I last saw lying in state. Instead of remembering them as a vibrant and viable entity, you see them for the last time as a mere shell of what they used to be. Psychologists often say that such closure with the loss of a loved one is a good thing. I strongly disagree. The last vestige of my childhood left me that day.

Or so I thought. That was until the morning that I crested that rise up by the Old Jailhouse and turned down Main Street of Jasper, Georgia. Thomas Wolfe once agonized about his old hometown in “You Can’t Go Home Again.” Evidently he had never heard of Jasper either. I’m here! And I hope that Jasper snores contentedly into the next millennium. By the way.....did I mention that they serve hotdogs down at the Carriage House? 🐾

“Conservancy News...”

(continued from page 3)

This event was sponsored by Bill and Sheila Ragsdale, and Mark and Lucy Dickerson. It was a chilly and colorful fall evening, perfect for huddling around the fire!

Dinner Atop Sanderlin Mountain

MCT members Joan and Burt Prater hosted a delicious meal on November 5th at their home in Big Canoe for the second ‘neighborhood’ mixer. Members and guests were invited to come eat, drink, and chat. This event served as another successful opportunity to help build a stronger sense of community among the Trust’s members. The Praters live atop Sanderlin Mountain with breathtaking views - a prime vantage point to enjoy the fall colors blanketing the surrounding mountains. Then, as the sun set, guests were treated to a spectacular full moon rise as they warmed themselves by the wood burning stove.

MCT President Mark Dickerson and Executive Director Robert Keller welcomed the guests and gave a brief presentation on the Land Trust and its goals. For the remainder of the evening, members and guests enjoyed each other’s conversation while they feasted on the culinary

delicacies prepared by the Praters.

Visit the MCT web site for information on upcoming mixers in your neighborhood.



The Prater Home on Sanderlin Mountain

Let us hear from you...

Do you have ideas for future events? Share them with us! Would you like more programs? What types of activities interest you? The Mountain Conservation Trust is here to serve you, so let us know how we can improve. 🐾

Mountain Conservation Trust “Conservation Speakeasy”

Join us monthly for these informative social happenings!
Visit the website for details on upcoming events
www.mctga.org/Events.htm

MCT Chooses Two New Board Members

The Board of Directors of the Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia is proud to announce that they have elected two new members: Ms. Martha Prince and Mr. Roger Schultz.

Roger is an Emory grad with a BA and MS in Geology. He has spent his entire career in the employee benefits field as a broker and consultant for employers. Roger enjoys travel, camping, hiking, tennis, sports, fishing, and working outside. He has 4 kids, 7 grand kids, and is trying to figure out how to slow down as 70 approaches next year.

Martha is a Pickens County native who always seems to end up back here, regardless of where her life’s adventures take her. She was a nurse for many years at Mountainside

hospital, but now she owns and maintains Pendley Creek Stables near Grandview Lake. She has one daughter, Jenna, a recent graduate of UGA who is beginning a dietic internship in Asheville, NC. The Grandview area has always held a special place in Martha’s heart because her grandparents had a cabin there while she was growing up, and preserving the beauty of North Georgia is at the top of her priority list.

The By-Laws of the Trust provide for a Board of up to 21 members. With the addition of Martha and Roger, Board membership stands at 17. If you know of someone that you believe would well serve the needs of the Trust, please contact Dan Pool at 706-253-2457. 🐾

Thank You!

New Members & Renewals - Jun. 1st, 2005 - Oct. 1st, 2006

(Donations Received after October 1st will be recognized in Spring 2007 Newsletter)

* please contact us if we've omitted your name

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Pickens County Progress
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The Woodbridge Inn

Grants

Pickens County Community Resources

Association, Inc. 2006. *“Creation of a Recreational Area on Donated Lands in Pickens County, Georgia”.*

Land Trust Alliance Southeast Land Trust

Matching Grants Program. 2006. *“Assessment of Land Trust Operational Standards and Practices and Improvements in Program Performance and Strategic Conservation”*

R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation, Inc. 2006

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Special Thanks

Thank you to **Martha Prince** for her generosity in providing the spectacular space for our Speakeasys.

Thank you to **Jerry Bearden of A1 Appraisal Associates** for his expertise in the assessment of our conserved lands.

Thank you to the **Edge Building LLC** for providing the Mountain Conservation Trust with the best office spaces in Jasper.

Thank you to the **Pickens County Progress** for informing the community of our various activities throughout the year.

Thank you to our **volunteers** who have helped in so many ways. Your generosity is very much appreciated and your assistance is invaluable.

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Thank you for your contribution!

A graphic for the St. Valentine's Conservation Ball. It features two cherubs holding a large red heart. The text "St. Valentine's Conservation Ball" and "Feb. 9th, 2007" is prominently displayed. At the bottom, the website address "www.mctga.org/valentine.htm" is provided.

St. Valentine's Conservation Ball
Feb. 9th, 2007
www.mctga.org/valentine.htm