Fresh Find: 
Students stumble on possible long-lost freshwater mussel

Jim L. Gillis Jr. named Distinguished Alum • Transgenic sweetgums clean up mercury
THE 2008 ALUMNI GOLF TOURNAMENT was a huge success thanks to the hard work of our Young Alumni Committee members and generous sponsors. The event took place during Homecoming Weekend at the University of Georgia Golf Course. The event had a record number of players with more than 100 participating! More than $10,000 in private dollars was raised to benefit the Young Alumni Endowment for Leadership Training. Once established, this endowment will provide funding for Leadership opportunities such as conference fees and host speakers.

This could not have been possible without the generous support from the following sponsors! Thank You!

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SAVE THE DATE

MAY
Continuing Education – Pine Straw Short Course: May 5-6, Tifton, Ga.
Savannah Area Alumni Event: May 6, 6-8 p.m., Mary Calder Golf Course, Contact Bridget Harden at (706) 542-0713 or bharden@warnell.uga.edu
Macon Area Alumni Event: Date TBA, Location TBA, Contact Bridget Harden at (706) 542-0713 or bharden@warnell.uga.edu
Continuing Education – Forestry for Non-foresters, Parts I and II: May 19-21, Flinchum’s Phoenix, Athens
Continuing Education – Forest Herbicide Short Course: Tifton, Ga.

JUNE
Continuing Education – Logging Cost Analysis: June 1-2, Charlotte, N.C.
Continuing Education – Wildlife Management: Date TBA, Athens

JULY
Continuing Education – GPS for Beginners: July 7-8, Athens
Continuing Education – Southern Pine Plantation Silviculture: July 13-14, Walton Beach, Fla.
Continuing Education – Recreational Pond Management: July 17-18, Flinchum’s Phoenix, Athens

AUGUST
Continuing Education – Nuisance Wildlife/Wildlife Damage Management Course: Aug. 5-6, Clemson University, Clemson, S.C.
Continuing Education – Conservation Easements for Forest Landowners: Date TBA, Location TBA

SEPTEMBER
Continuing Education – Alternative Forest Enterprises, Non-timber Forest Products: Sept. 15-16, Athens
Continuing Education – Deer Ecology and Management: Date TBA, Athens

OCTOBER
Continuing Education – Tree Health Care: Date TBA, Atlanta

NOVEMBER
Homecoming Golf Tournament and Lunch: Nov. 6, 8:30 a.m. shotgun start, UGA Golf Course
Sporting Clays Shoot, Nov. 6, 10 a.m. at Brush Creek, Athens Alumni School Tour of facilities, grounds and Whitehall Mansion Open House: Nov. 6, Time TBA
Annual Alumni Association Meeting: Nov. 6, 5:30 p.m., Flinchum’s Phoenix basement
Alumni Dinner and presentation of awards: Nov. 6, Time TBA, Flinchum’s Phoenix
Game Day BBQ: Nov. 7, Time TBA
UGA v. Tennessee Tech: Nov. 7, 1 p.m. (tentative kickoff)
Warnell cannot guarantee tickets for the football game. For ticket information please call the UGA Athletic Association Ticket Office at (706) 542-1231.
Continuing Education – Forest Roads in the Piedmont and Coastal Plains: Nov. 15 – 16, Georgia Forestry Commission, Macon, Ga.
With enrollment increasing and Warnell programs expanding, we are excited about our undergraduate and graduate programs here at the school.

This year’s spring entering class is the largest since 2000 with undergraduate enrollment now at 288 students. We now have 171 professional students. I want to thank Recruitment Coordinator Emily Lakemaker, Student Services Coordinator Emily Saunders, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Ron Hendrick, and the faculty and staff that regularly donate their time to student recruiting activities. Great Job! Similarly, thanks to all of you alumni and friends that have helped identify and attract all these great young professionals interested in careers in forestry and natural resources. Here at the University of Georgia, resources flow to those programs that are growing, and Warnell programs have grown considerably over the past three years. Warnell continues to emphasize the active management of our natural resources, and we are excited about the future of our school and the opportunities presented to our graduates.

Obviously this year has also been a challenging one for everyone. The economic slowdown, coupled with large changes in natural resources professions, has required many of us to adapt. State budgets around the country have required most states to reduce spending across the board — including support for higher education. Here at UGA we have enacted a 10 percent budget cut for Fiscal Year 2009 and expectations are similar for 2010. Due primarily to our endowment and other resources, Warnell has been able to minimize the impacts to our programs thus far. By using open positions, being careful with existing resources and trimming a few items from the budget, we have been able to respond to the situation without personnel layoffs or early retirements. Much of this has been accomplished by taking advantage of our endowment — thanks again to our alumni and friends. Our expectations are that 2010 will be a challenging year for Georgia and for Warnell. However, with the continued support from our alumni and friends, we are certain that we will weather the storm.

On a final note, Provost Arnett Mace has announced his retirement from UGA at the end of 2009. As you know, Arnett was the Dean here at Warnell before accepting the Provost’s position and has been instrumental in our success. We will miss his sage advice and constant support of our programs. UGA will conduct a search this year to identify a replacement. I want to thank Arnett for all of his help and encouragement over the years.

Mike Clutter, Dean, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources
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On the cover:
Warnell graduate student Colin Shea collected mussels from Muckalee Creek recently. Shea is part of a team that is optimistic that the winged spike, a mussel long believed to have disappeared, may have been found in Georgia’s Flint River. Photo by J. P. Bond

Contents photo:
Students frolic in the snow on March 1, 2009, when several inches of snow was dumped on Athens. The snow forced UGA to shut down the following day.

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How are we doing?
We welcome letters to the editor and feedback from our readers. Submit news items, questions or address changes to:

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WARNELL SCHOOL OF FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION
Mike Clutter, Dean; Ron Hendrick, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs; Jim Sweeney, Associate Dean of Research and Service; Kim Holt, Director of Development; Bridget Harden, Director of Alumni Relations; Bob Izlar, Director of the Center for Forest Business; Anuj Sinha, Director of Finance and Administration
Scouting out Warnell: Boy Scouts invade

For two days this past year, Warnell’s student body population got significantly younger as more than 250 Boy Scouts swarmed the school for both the Fall and Spring Advance-a-Ramas. The biannual extravaganza – which provides the young men a chance to earn merit badges – is more than just an event passing through. Several Warnell professors, administrators and students have ties to the Boy Scouts of America, and several graduate students stepped up to teach classes and lead teams out to Whitehall Forest for some schooling on forestry, mammal study and environmental science.

Dale Greene is one of the professors with a strong tie to the Boy Scouts. His 15-year-old son Tom chose Warnell’s Oconee Forest Park off campus as the site of his Eagle Scout project. Greene taught a forestry class at Whitehall, one of several led by professionals for the Cherokee District, which hosts the Advance-a-Ramas. Boy Scouts from four states attended both. February’s Spring Advance-a-Rama is the sixth time Warnell has held the daylong event, taking over hosting duties after it moved from the U.S. Navy Supply School.

Greene said both Warnell and the Boy Scouts of America share a common link to environmental stewardship, so the partnership is a natural one. “That’s the basis of all we do here,” he said. “We’ve got Scouts who’ve come through here and help with the Advance-a-Ramas. Warnell is just a good central location for the facilities on campus, and Whitehall is just a few minutes away.”

Merging Majors: Fisheries and Aquaculture joining Wildlife

The Warnell School is streamlining two of its core major tracks, merging Wildlife and Fisheries and Aquaculture into one unified major. Once the combination goes into full effect, Warnell will offer two areas of emphasis for students: Wildlife biology or aquatic sciences. There will be a grandfathering phase while students already enrolled at Warnell transition.

Ron Hendrick, associate dean for academic affairs, said the merger goes into effect with the Fall 2009 semester for all incoming students. Students have reacted favorably to the change, he said, and faculty in both majors worked hard to make the merger succeed. Approved by the Board of Regents this past fall, the combination of Fisheries and Aquaculture with Wildlife offers a distinct advantage to students who are required to study habitat management. Hendrick noted that many habitat management problems affect both aquaculture and terrestrial programs. The merger will offer those students a wider education, he said, and will also still meet certification standards for both The Wildlife Society and The Fisheries Society.

“We thought having a combined major adds breadth to our fisheries and wildlife management programs,” Hendrick said. “Restructuring of some courses allows us to more effectively use faculty resources. We’ve restructured some of the individual courses to broaden their appeal to non-majors.”
The Warnell School’s Internet presence has grown as the school embraces Web 2.0 ideas of increased social networking, sharing and creativity. Not only do we now have a new and improved Web site, but you can be a fan of Warnell on Facebook by joining its fan page. The school’s mascot, Cornelius “Corny” Warnell also has a Facebook profile, and at more than 125 friends, might have more Internet buddies than you. Warnell is also offering numerous podcasts, videos and audio items for free at iTunes University, while several Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism seniors have helped flesh out Google Earth by pinpointing detailed information about Rabun County’s most popular spots on the program.
Warnell attends Georgia Forestry Day at the Capitol

Warnell staff, faculty and student ambassadors attended Georgia Forestry Day at the Capitol on Feb. 5, assisting the Georgia Forestry Association with its annual Young Professionals Meeting held in Atlanta. Pictured left to right: (Back row) Ron Hendrick, associate dean of academic affairs; Emily Saunders, student and career services coordinator; student ambassadors Garrett Mack, Jess McNeil, Miles Groover and Ryan Reddish; (front row) Emily Lakemaker, recruitment coordinator; student ambassadors Tyler Wachtel, Mallory Cronic, Kendra Huffine and Jennifer Willis.

Warnell on the rise

Warnell’s popularity among natural resources students is climbing. Enrollment is up 18 percent since Spring 2008, continuing an upward trend that has been aided by a stronger emphasis on recruitment. Over the past two and a half years, Warnell has added a full-time recruitment coordinator and increased the school’s presence where students would be interested in our majors.

It’s been paying off. Ron Hendrick, associate dean for academic affairs, said in addition to higher enrollment, Warnell’s visibility on campus and across the state has improved. The school has been involved in general education at UGA and participated in a number of outreach and educational events that target middle and high school students and the general public. Warnell has also hosted the Governor’s Honors Program students, the regional Envirothon competition and assisted with the Cherokee District’s Boy Scouts biannual Advance-a-Rama.

“We’ve seen growth the past two years since we began doing more targeted recruitment and hired a dedicated recruiter,” Hendrick said. “The assistance of our student ambassadors, numerous faculty and external friends and supporters has also had a big impact.”
LARRY MORRIS: FROM RAMBUNCTIOUS YOUNGSTER TO WATER AND SOILS EXPERT

By SANDI MARTIN

Larry Morris grew up in a Connecticut suburb bordering hundreds of acres of woods. He and friends would spend summer days exploring and plotting their adventures. His forest management interest developed early. When he was around 10, he spent nearly a day cutting down a large red maple with his dad’s handsaw. Perhaps this was the beginning of the winding route from rambunctious youngster to respected soils researcher that Morris took. “Unlike many of my friends and colleagues that always knew they wanted to become a university professor, and worked toward that end, my path was a bit of a random walk,” the 56-year-old said. “Each time I was about to leave academia behind, some opportunity arose that was just too good to pass up. I am incredibly lucky to have stayed and to be here at UGA.”

Morris didn’t let that red maple go to waste. Once he and his friend finished cutting it down, it became part of a pretty impressive fort. He may have gotten a taste for the outdoors as a child, but his education at the University of Maine began when he followed his best friend to the college’s forestry program. It was the Arab oil embargo, poor economy and scarce job market that helped him decide to go to graduate school at the State University of New York in Syracuse. He spent two summers camping and collecting data along the Delaware, Susquehanna and Chemung Rivers for his M.S. thesis on bottomland hardwood forest - soil relationships. His random walk next led him to the University of Florida, where he spent a year as a research tech before being convinced to pursue a Ph.D. in soil science. Following four years in Gainesville, he landed at North Carolina State, where he was an assistant professor of forestry and soil science. “I loved NC State and felt I had found my home when I moved there,” he reflected. But two friends from Warnell convinced him to apply for the forest soil position here. He and his family packed up and arrived in Athens in the fall of 1985.

Since moving to Athens, Morris has enjoyed watching Warnell’s programs expand to include Water and Soil Resources and Natural Resources Recreation and Tourism as areas of study. Morris has taught senior project since the late 1980s and he remarks that “changes in Warnell forces us in senior projects to expand our thinking to match the expansion of our programs. It’s been a lot of fun.” Morris’ instruction focus at Warnell has been on forest soil management and urban tree management, but he’s especially proud of recent efforts to “build bridges to Brazil.” This effort includes development of undergraduate student exchanges on the UGA campus, co-teaching of a study abroad in Brazil, development of research projects in both southern and northern Brazil, and participation in a program of sustainable development and education for communities along the lower Amazon River.

While at Warnell, Morris has taught hundreds of students, even his own son, Art. Larry and his wife of 31 years, Sue Lawrence, also have a daughter, Laura, who attended business school at UGA. Moving to Athens has become a family affair. Over the past few years, Morris’ parents, two sets of aunts and uncles, sister and brother-in-law moved to the area. Life in Warnell has forced him to expand his horizons. At 48, Morris said, he learned Portuguese, partly because of the can-do attitude prevalent here. The students “keep you on your toes,” and the wealth of expertise available at the Warnell School creates an excellent collegial group. “I can’t imagine working anywhere else,” he said.

PHOTO: J.P. BOND
Staff members honored at Homecoming dinner

Warnell’s 2008 Homecoming celebrations weren’t just about golf and football. The alumni association recognized three Warnell staff members, giving its annual recognition to Brian Fosgate, Gail Lutowski and Diane Pritchett at the Homecoming dinner on Oct. 17 at Flinchum’s Phoenix.

Fosgate has been Warnell’s writing coach for the past nine years. An alumnus of UGA’s Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, Fosgate works with four classes per semester, meeting individually with students to evaluate and discuss writing performance on assignments. Fosgate’s wife Helen is editor of uga research, UGA’s research magazine.

Lutowski is a program specialist at the Mary Kahrs Warnell Forest Education Center in Effingham County. She has worked at Warnell since 2001. At the center in Guyton, Ga., she hosts forestry and natural resource education programs for students from kindergarten through the 12th grade, as well as teachers and the general public.

Pritchett, an administrative specialist, has been with Warnell for nine years and UGA for 25. She handles the day-to-day operations of the Georgia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit based out of Warnell, with most of her work involving contracts and budget preparation for the unit’s faculty. She works closely with other Warnell staff to ensure accountability of unit funds.

Wildlife disease specialist, UGA alum joins Warnell as new professor

Sonia Hernandez-Divers, a board-certified veterinarian and ecologist, has joined the Warnell faculty as an assistant professor in a joint position with the UGA College of Veterinary Medicine at the Southeastern Cooperative of Wildlife Disease Study. Hernandez-Divers, who is a wildlife disease specialist, is currently teaching undergraduate conservation classes and plans to teach graduate students this fall. She is focusing her research on all aspects of wildlife disease, but with a particular interest on how human-related activities influence disease dynamics. She joined the school in October 2008.

Hernandez-Divers attended Louisiana State University’s School of Veterinary Medicine, graduating in 1996. She moved to an internship at Sonora Veterinary Specialists in Arizona, then private practice before completing a three-year wildlife medicine residency at Cornell University in 2001. She and her husband moved to Athens in 2001, where she worked part-time in private practice and later earned a Ph.D. from UGA’s ecology school in 2008.

Hernandez-Divers hopes to develop an academic career that bridges veterinary medicine – especially free-ranging wildlife population disease investigation – with ecology and conservation. “I feel very lucky to be in this position,” she said. “I began working with Warnell faculty and students in a variety of ways during my doctoral work, and I was always impressed by two things: The emphasis that Warnell places on teaching and fostering student education, and the overall openness and inviting attitude towards collaboration with which I was treated. This shared position is truly a dream, with a perfect mixture of opportunities, where I aim to thrive in both teaching and research.”
Many researchers have identified a common theme in today’s society: Reduced contact between children and nature. Children who spend less time outdoors suffer more physical and behavioral problems. The adverse effects of nature-deficit disorder, a term used by Richard Louv to describe the symptoms of nature deprivation in his 2005 book “Last Child in the Woods,” may also influence the conservation ethos of the next generation.

Environmental education could help children from different gender, age and ethnic groups reconnect with the natural environment. However, the effects of environmental education on affective growth in an increasingly diverse society are poorly understood. From 2007-2008, a team of researchers led by Warnell Natural Resources Recreation and Tourism graduate student Lincoln Larson, Assistant Professor Gary Green and Associate Professor Steven Castleberry investigated the impact of an environmental education program on the environmental orientations of African American, Hispanic and white children from the Athens, Ga., area. The study was a collaborative effort involving many community organizations, including the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, the Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department, the Boys and Girls Club of Athens and the Clarke County Public Schools.

The researchers created a short survey based on existing instruments to measure children’s environmental attitudes and awareness. Ninety 6- to 13-year-olds participating in five-day environmental education summer camps took the survey. Camps were based on the State Botanical Garden’s Garden Earth Naturalist curricula, which help children understand many different services that nature provides. Participants were surveyed and interviewed before and after the one-week program to evaluate changes in environmental attitudes, awareness and knowledge. Pre- and post-camp surveys were compared to responses for a control group of 100 second to fifth-grade students from local schools.

Results indicated that children 10 and older were less interested and less concerned about nature than their younger classmates. Minority children displayed lower levels of awareness and knowledge of environmental issues than white children. The environmental education summer camp addressed some of these disparities. The program had a positive effect on the attitudes of participants from all age and ethnic groups. The largest post-camp changes were observed in the environmental awareness and knowledge of African-American children. As support for legislation such as the No Child Left Inside Act makes environmental education a higher priority, new programs dedicated to raising environmental literacy could benefit from efforts to build and maintain positive environmental attitudes and awareness in underserved populations. The Warnell research team will continue to examine environmental education in the Athens area and beyond to identify strategies that promote positive outdoor experiences for children from all backgrounds.
Fresh Find:
Students stumble on possible long-lost freshwater mussel

By SANDI MARTIN  Photos by J.P. BOND

Colin Shea is determined to find an extinct mussel. Before ever leaving to survey streams in the Flint River basin, the Warnell Ph.D. student joked that he would find one of three mussel species native to the river that are believed to be extinct. Mussels are notoriously difficult to find, he said, and just as hard to identify. “We’ve always joked about finding one of them. The reality is that when you’re looking for mussels, anything can happen the second you put your head in the water.”

Finding an extinct mussel wasn’t the primary goal when Shea and Jason Meador (MS ‘08) began sampling for Flint River mussels in May 2008, but the pair may have done just that. The Warnell graduate students were on a mission from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to conduct a status assessment of Flint River mussels when they came across one that “just didn’t look quite right,” said Dr. James Peterson, Shea’s major professor at Warnell. “There was something different about it.” The mussel has been tentatively identified as the winged spike (*Elliptio nigella*), which was last collected in 1958. Researchers, however, aren’t ready to claim discovery just yet.

Dr. Jim Williams, an expert on fish and mussel taxonomy, has taken a look at the specimen the two students found. Hesitant to confirm anything without seeing others, Williams and a group that included GADNR Malacologist Jason Wisniewski went looking for more specimens several weeks later, finding what appeared to be more of the same mussel at two additional locations. Although all of the specimens look similar, their true identity remains uncertain because they are easily confused with other species. Complicating identification further is that Williams, Shea and Wisniewski examined 42 lots at the Florida Museum of Natural History identified as the winged spike and concluded that only 11 were identified accurately, leaving them cautiously hopeful that they have found the winged spike.

Few surveys of the mainstream Flint River have been conducted, one of the reasons that species such as the winged spike and another presumed-extinct Flint River species, the lined pocketbook (*Lampsilis binominata*), have not been collected in many years. But the winged spike is not the first mussel to have been found years after last being collected. In past years, the fat threeridge (*Amblema neislerii*) and the Altamaha arcmussel have been collected long after scientists believed they had disappeared. However, as with the winged spike, their true identity remains unclear because of the complexities surrounding mussel taxonomy.

With at least 300 known species, North America is the world center of freshwater mussels, and Georgia ranks third among all states for freshwater mussel diversity. Unfortunately, mussel populations throughout North America have declined drastically during the past century, and researchers still know very little about why. “Mussels depend on host fish to survive and reproduce, and most rely on specific species of fish,”
Peterson said, “Knowing which fish are needed is critical to finding out how environmental changes affect their survival. If drought or overuse of water eliminates a fish species, mussels dependent on that species are at risk of dying out.”

Scientists believe that impoundments, poor land use practices, pesticides and sedimentation also have contributed to mussel population declines, but the dominant factors remain unclear. The Flint River basin historically harbored 31 mussel species. Today, three of these species are considered extinct, and five species are protected under the Endangered Species Act. Peterson and Shea hope their continued work will shed light on the current status of the basin’s mussels and increase understanding of the factors influencing their ability to persist. “Of course,” Shea said, “we’re open to a few surprises along the way.”
GENETICALLY ENGINEERED SWEETGUM TREES GROWN TO DETOXIFY MERCURY

By SANDI MARTIN

Scott Merkle sees a mercury problem coming. The forest biology researcher says environmental engineers already have to deal with traditional mercury contamination from smelting facilities, aluminum makers or fungicide factories. Already one of the most commonly used elements — it’s even found in dental fillings — mercury is now found in compact fluorescent light bulbs, the alternative to incandescent bulbs being touted as environmentally friendly. So long as people don’t toss them in the trash when they die, he said. But there’s the rub — many people are likely to ignore warnings that the mercury-filled bulbs don’t belong in the landfill. And there’s already plenty of mercury contamination to deal with, he said. Cleaning it up, Merkle explained, conventionally means digging it up, taking it away and sealing it in a “concrete coffin.”

That can cost millions of dollars, he calculates, and is “very, very destructive of the environment, and you pretty much never recover the land.” He and other researchers at Warnell and the University of Georgia may have a cheaper and better solution: Transgenic sweetgum trees that process the mercury in the soil and releases it into the atmosphere as a vapor. Merkle, collaborator Richard Meagher with the UGA Genetics Department and former Warnell graduate student JianLiang Dai have published a paper in a forthcoming issue of New Forests on their efforts to genetically engineer such a tree. The promising lab results — which have not yet been field tested — haven’t broken new ground, but have instead furthered previous research started in the 1990s on yellow-poplar and eastern cottonwood trees.

That started with an idea from Dr. Meagher, who pitched it to Merkle: Take cloned genes from a mercury-eating bacterium and put them in plants. The bacteria have the ability to take the most toxic forms of mercury — methylmercury and mercuric ion — and convert them into the least toxic form, elemental mercury. The idea evolved into transferring those genes to trees, whose root systems go further underground. Their first collaborative effort on yellow-poplar never made it to the field because that tree doesn’t grow well on wet sites, which are the more likely locations for mercury contamination. But they achieved widespread success with their work in engineering the cottonwoods to handle mercury, publishing a paper that made the cover of Plant Biotechnology Journal in 2003.
Merkle wasn’t satisfied. “Cottonwood’s OK,” he said. “But they don’t grow well in clay soils. They prefer sandy soils.” Sweetgum trees, however, fill that void. Dai started work on improving the method for transferring foreign genes into cultured sweetgum cells. He then tested two different genes, finding that the mercuric ion reductase (merA) gene worked better than another gene that helped make phytochelatins, proteins that sequester metal ions. The trees with the phytochelatin synthesis gene grew stunted and died quickly, even when not exposed to mercury, Merkle said. However, trees with the merA gene not only grew well, but could convert mercuric ion to the much less toxic elemental mercury.

Although interest and research funding into mercury-detoxifying trees has tapered off a bit since early success with the cottonwoods, Merkle said the practical applications of such a genetically engineered plant make it a worthwhile study. The trees, he said, can be planted at sites with heavy contamination, such as around facilities used by the smelting industry, fungicide factories and even aluminum makers. While conventional cleanup methods can cost millions of dollars, he said, planting sweetgum trees is more effective and far cheaper. Researchers just do not yet know how long such a natural cleanup would take. However, once the trees are deployed, since they live for decades, they can just stay on the site until the job is done, and help stabilize the soil and return the contaminated site to productive use at the same time.

The National Science Foundation is paying $6.7 million for a consortium of universities led by UGA – which will include several Warnell researchers – to study the effects climate change and urbanization has on the southern Appalachian Mountains. Warnell is the administrative unit for the grant, which extends the Coweeta Long-Term Ecological Research project. Assistant professors Jeff Heppinstall, John Maerz, Rebecca Moore and Associate Professor Rhett Jackson from Warnell are involved in the project.

Warnell tree experts are looking for a more effective way for wood production companies to monitor moisture levels in logs without having to take wood samples. Dr. Laurie Schimleck said the most promising method being studied involves time domain reflectometry, a microwave-based technique similar to radar. If successful, the potential implications include more efficient use of water and more consistent wood quality.

A recent Warnell study on whether ivory-billed woodpeckers could have survived extinction more than six decades ago could increase debate about the birds. A lack of credible sightings of the “Lord God Bird” has led some researchers to believe they died out in the 1940s, but a population model, detailed in a paper published in Avian Conservation and Ecology, indicates that the birds could have survived with as few as five mated pairs. Professors Michael Conroy, Jim Peterson and Robert Cooper, post-docs Brady Mattsson and Rua Mordecai and Danish researcher Hans Christensen worked on the model.

Dr. C. Rhett Jackson and graduate student Katie Price have been investigating the effects of forest conversion to pasture and lawn upon the valley soils of the southern Appalachians as part of the Coweeta Long-Term Ecological Research program. The magnitudes of differences between forest and non-forest infiltration rates suggest that widespread conversion of forest to other land uses in this region would be accompanied by decreased infiltration and increased overland flow, potentially significantly altering water budgets and leading to reduced baseflows and impaired water quality.

Assistant Professor Craig Miller’s survey on public perception of black bears in Georgia found that most people strongly support conservation efforts. The survey of 4,000 residents in Bleckley, Houston, Pulaski and Twiggs counties will be used by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as it develops a management program for black bears.
It was a busy night. That’s what Sgt. Joe Webber (BSFR ’06) remembers of the June 27 night shift. Before the current Warnell graduate student got the call from a fellow officer, the University of Georgia Police Department had already responded to a report of a sexual assault and a brawl in the North Campus Parking Deck involving more than 30 people. And that was all before 2 a.m., before the bars stopped serving and started kicking people out. It was right around then, however, that he biked over near downtown after being called as backup.

At an East Campus parking lot, he found Cpl. Jeremy Densmore desperately hanging on to the belt of a young man trying to escape from police by crawling over a fence topped with razor wire. “He took the absolute worst possible route to get away,” Webber said.

Six months later, Webber, Densmore and two other UGA officers were honored for their efforts that 2008 summer night. It’s not something Webber expected or cared about. “We were just trying to make sure the kid didn’t die,” he said.

The young man very well could have. The officers got him down from the fence, but by then, the young student from Kennesaw State University had suffered severe cuts on both arms, slicing open arteries. Webber and the others thought fast, putting a tourniquet around the wounds and then lots of pressure to stave off the bleeding while waiting for paramedics. “That was the longest 10 to 15 minutes,” he recalled.

Webber, who had to take a year off from UGA to attend the police academy, joined the university department in 2003 as a way to earn his tuition. He plans to stay on as a police officer for another three years after earning his master’s degree in forest business in 2010 to give him enough time to become vested in UGA’s retirement plan, learn Portuguese and obtain a real estate license. It’s been hard, he said, being a graduate student while working full-time at a job that often requires difficult hours. “The professors at the Warnell School have been tremendous,” he said.
Jennifer Willis took an unusual route to Warnell. It’s not often that Warnell’s water and soils majors have art degrees and pass up the chance to study international affairs. The 23-year-old undergraduate from Snellville – by her own admission a “city girl” – doesn’t even look like she’d want to travel to third-world countries to work on safe water management.

Willis, who is also a Warnell Student Ambassador, said most people don’t immediately think she’s a water and soils major. But the president of the American Water Resource Association – who transferred from Young Harris College in 2006 with an Associate’s degree in art – has no problem getting dirty. She works for the UGA Equestrian team, donning camouflage coveralls when she’s cleaning up in the barn. Her dad, a retired principal, is to thank for her ability to brave the great outdoors. Her parents, she said, frequently took her and her brother camping, only they didn’t have the luxuries many people expect when heading to a state park with shower facilities, electricity and even cable hook ups. “No RV,” she said. “No fancy-schmancy stuff. We did tents. We were lucky if we got a shower. My brother and I grew up really appreciating the outdoors.”

Willis, who hopes to graduate in December 2009, has her eye on grad school, but she’s already pondering her career choices. The former art student, who discarded a potential career in art restoration, also passed over international affairs when she transferred to UGA. She briefly considered joining the ecology school, but was ultimately drawn to Warnell’s water and soils program. She’s particularly interested in the poor water conditions in places like Africa, but also the regulations the agricultural community is dealing with here. “I want to help people learn to efficiently manage their water resources,” she says.
Former Warnell doctoral candidate Carolyn Belcher led a team to the waters off of Brunswick, Ga., in August 2008 as part of her research of sharks. Their efforts include tagging the creatures and measuring them before releasing them back into the Atlantic.
I don’t know that I ever bought into the philosophy of “a good shark is a dead shark,” but I definitely didn’t understand why anyone would want to protect such dangerous creatures. Little did I know I was fated to spend much of my career trying to understand these much maligned creatures.

I have always enjoyed biology and life sciences but never envisioned myself in a career as a biologist of any kind. I was pursuing a career in mathematics and computers when I had to take an applied field of study for my statistics classes. While many friends were looking into actuarial science, econometrics or industrial engineering, I decided to focus on biology. This led me to a Master’s degree research project working with the National Marine Fisheries Service’s Apex Predator Program, which has been conducting shark related research for decades and has one of the largest cooperative tagging programs for sharks in the northwest Atlantic. Research is focused on distributional patterns, migratory patterns and biological analyses that investigate diet, reproduction and age-and-growth. My job was to analyze data from three surveys to provide estimates of abundance for three shark species, but as I began to write my thesis, I found myself developing more of an interest in the fish and their unique biology.

In general, shark life histories are more similar to large mammals than most fishes. Shark life histories are characterized by late age-at-maturity, slow growth and low reproductive rates. These traits, which have allowed them to dominate the oceans for millennia, also cause these animals to be extremely vulnerable to fishing pressure. When the first shark fishery management plan was put in place in 1993, some populations of sharks were estimated as being reduced by more than 80 percent. After 15 years of strict management, some species are still not expected to recover before the midpoint of the 21st century. Other species are being considered for endangered species status. Despite great advances in our knowledge, the ecological importance of these creatures is always overshadowed by their potential to maim and kill humans.

I’ve spent the past nine years studying the function of Georgia’s coastal waters as shark pupping and nursery grounds. Much of this work is supporting my doctoral research, and this time I am the lead field biologist. I have handled 11 species of shark including bull and tiger sharks, two of the top three “marauders.” All of the shark species captured in Georgia waters are live-bearers, with shark pups being miniature carbon copies of their parents. There is no parental care involved in their early lives, and although they are apex predators from birth, larger sharks do prey on smaller sharks. Every year I become more and more intrigued and enthralled with these creatures.

Carolyn Belcher graduated in December 2008 with her Ph.D. from Warnell. She now works for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as a natural resources biologist.
I’ve known I wanted to study northern bobwhites since I was 19 years old. I vividly remember the day my curiosity was aroused by the country’s greatest gamebird! It was a cold overcast December day, and I was enjoying a fine dove shoot over a late-harvested corn field. The shooting had slowed down for a bit so I decided to prospect around the edge of the field for wildlife sign. My eye was caught by a group of birds scurrying around in the field, feeding frantically on the waste grain. As I approached closer, I confirmed it was a covey of bobwhites. This was a welcomed surprise since bobwhites are virtually absent from my neck of the woods in Piedmont North Carolina — Roxboro to be exact. The efficiency and gracefulness of how they foraged was absolutely fascinating. This event triggered a lifelong passion for bobwhites and many other birds.

I was willing to go anywhere in the country to study bobwhites but luckily ended up here at Warnell. Dr. John Carroll gave me the opportunity to fulfill my dream. For the past five years I have been conducting research on bobwhites throughout south and central Florida. During those years, I and my great technicians have collected approximately 15,000 radio telemetry locations on bobwhites. We know where bobwhites eat, sleep and make little bobwhites. More importantly we have assisted landowners increase their bobwhite populations to higher levels. All of this would not have been possible without the opportunity from Warnell and Tall Timbers Research Station.

When I am not in the field I am here on campus taking classes and assisting Dr. Karl Miller with the wildlife habitat management class. The fall of 2008 was my fourth consecutive fall helping out with the class. Each year brings a new and different set of students from varying backgrounds. Dr. Miller does a superb job adapting to an every changing audience, but not deviating from the thesis of the course. Teaching is something I would have never considered as a potential career, but I can see myself doing so in the future.

UGA and Warnell are great institutions. I feel privileged to have been a part of them during my tenure. Hopefully, once I complete my dissertation this year I will remain a part of their legacy. Thirty years from now I will still remember that covey of bobwhites and so many memories of being here at Warnell.

James Martin is a doctoral candidate in wildlife working under Professor John Carroll.
Karen Alexy wasn’t headed toward a career in wildlife. While at Florida State University, the 36-year-old was sure she’d end up a veterinarian. That is, until she took a biology conservation class and learned about the possibilities a wildlife major presents. “I was interested in wildlife my whole life,” she said. “I just didn’t know it was a viable career.”

Changing her major to wildlife after transferring to the University of Georgia led to her promotion to wildlife division director in February 2007, making her the first woman in the country in such a position, and also spurred Alexy being named Warnell’s Distinguished Young Alumna of 2008. Alexy (MS ’99, BSFR ’96) traveled from Kentucky last October to receive her award at Warnell’s Homecoming festivities. “I was honored to receive the award and am grateful to those that supported me. It was great to be back on campus, if only to reminisce for a short time.”

Born in Mississippi, Alexy grew up in Florida. An outdoorswoman from an early age, she now shares that passion with her 7-year-old niece, Eden. While at Warnell, Alexy worked with white-tailed deer, reptiles and amphibians, focusing her research on those species. But her research interests extend to wildlife management and conservation, diseases and toxicology and population dynamics of small mammals and herpetofauna. Alexy, who earned her Ph.D. in forest resources from Clemson University, worked in various positions while a student at Warnell. In 2004, she landed at the University of Kentucky as a post-doctoral scholar, following up on earlier work on Kentucky’s elk restoration program, moving to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources in 2005 to serve as the agency’s wildlife research coordinator.

Her career path has had a natural progression, she said, spurred by her increased interest in being a leader in wildlife resources. “When I started all this, I saw myself as a professor and conducting research,” Alexy said. “But as time went on, working in the area of resource management appealed to me.”

The Warnell Alumni Office is now accepting nominations for the Distinguished Alumnus Award and Distinguished Young Alumnus Award.

To qualify for the Distinguished Young Alumnus Award, the graduate must be 35 years old or younger and hold a position of responsibility with demonstrated success and are active and supportive of the Warnell Alumni Association.

The Distinguished Alumnus Award is given in honor of contributions and commitment to Warnell, profession and respective community.

Nominations are due by Aug. 1, 2009.

Please mail nominations – including a summary of the nominee’s contributions to the natural resources profession and three references – to:

Attn: Dean Mike Clutter
Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602-2152
James Lester Gillis Jr. was just 15 years old when he came to the University of Georgia in 1932. Just a scared country boy, he said, he was terrified that he’d flunk his classes. So the beginning of his time at the Warnell School was defined by studying hard and staying focused on school. But then he discovered the extracurricular activities Athens had to offer: dancing and socializing and girls. “I made the dean’s list a few times, and then I found out that good times were to be had,” he joked. “And that was the end of that!”

But the little boy who loved playing in the forests of South Georgia didn’t lose his passion for the state’s forestland. Jim Gillis grew up to be one of the state’s most influential supporters of Georgia’s forestland, rising to the ranks of chairman of the Georgia Forestry Commission and serving in state and Soperton politics. The 92-year-old has been honored multiple times by various organizations, and was once even named one of the 100 Most Powerful and Influential People in Georgia by Georgia Trend Magazine. His strong advocacy for Georgia’s forests and support for the Warnell School garnered him another accolade last October. The 2008 Distinguished Alumnus Award. Gillis (BSFR ’37) accepted the award with humility and laughter, telling the packed crowd at the annual Homecoming dinner that he didn’t think he deserved it.

“When they called and told me about this honor, I told my secretary I wasn’t entitled to it and that I didn’t know what to say,” Mr. Gillis said last October. “And she said, ‘Don’t say anything but thanks!’”

Months later, he said he’s still humbled by the award and still insists that others were more deserving. “It’s a modesty that has defined his life and career,” said Bob Izlar, director of Warnell’s Center for Forest Business. “Jim L. is an icon in Georgia forestry. His long, stellar career has made so many distinguished contributions to the betterment of forestry. He won’t tell you about those, but all you have to do is look at the work of the Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Forestry Association, American Turpentine Farmers’ Association, Warnell Alumni Association, the Jayhole Club and Forest Landowners’ Association. You’ll see Jim L.’s positive imprint everywhere. On top of all that, he is a true gentleman,” notes Izlar.

Born on Oct. 2, 1916, as the first-born son of Jim L. Gillis Sr. and Annie Lois Walker Gillis, the Warnell alum grew up on land his family had settled on in 1820 when they acquired thousands of acres in Treutlen County. He remembers loving being in the forest, but being reared during the Depression, he said, took its toll. “Life was pretty tough back then,” he said. “It was quite a trying time.”

At 15, he headed to UGA after graduating from high school as valedictorian. Since graduating at 20, Gillis’ career has been long and varied. For decades, he has been one of the state’s most respected figures. He’s been a banker, a timberman, cattleman and farmer. He’s a staunch conservation worker, manages more than 12,000 acres of timberland still and is president of his family’s corporation, Soperton Naval Stores Inc., running both it and his family’s timberland business since 1938. But he’s also been a constant presence in state politics and movements, serving on a number of boards and acting as presidents of various organizations, including the Georgia Association of Soil Conservation Districts. His varied resume includes a stint as president of the Georgia Forestry Association – which his father helped start – and he spent 26 years as chairman of the Georgia Forestry Commission and continues to serve on the board of the agency he’s been a member of since 1977. He spent 40 years as a Treutlen County Commissioner, was a state senator in the 1940s and has been a member of the Lions Club for more than 70 years.

And yet despite his decades of service, hard work and accolades, the father of four, grandfather of 10 and great-grandfather to 12 downplays the impact he’s had on Georgia. “I always wanted what was best for the forestry industry and the private landowners,” he said from his home in Soperton. “It was an honor to be in a position to help.”
Jim Gillis (center) was surrounded by family when named Warnell’s Distinguished Alumnus last October at Flinchum’s Phoenix. The next day, he had a skybox view of UGA’s Homecoming victory after touring his alma mater.
Gifts from the future:
Planned gifts help Warnell

By SANDI MARTIN

Nellie Herringdine didn’t attend the Warnell School. The former Georgia schoolteacher actually graduated from what was then called Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville, earning both her bachelor’s and master’s degree there. But she couldn’t have done that without the timber her father, William Shirey, sold to finance her education, said her son, Bill Herringdine (MPA ’84). His mother opted to donate 90 acres to UGA because of his connection, he said, and they chose Warnell because it was timber that paid her way through school.

“My mother was the first member of her family to go to college,” Mr. Herringdine, a former UGA development officer, said. “That really would not have happened without the determination and sacrifice her father made for her all those years. He was a simple, humble man. I never knew him. We’d hate it if he and all he did be forgotten.”

Mrs. Herringdine is the latest of many people who are contributing to Warnell’s future via a planned gift. The former teacher, now 87, has already donated the land to Warnell. A planned gift, Warnell Development Director Kim Holt said, is one way alumni and friends of the school can help it fulfill its core mission. “A planned gift is an excellent way to preserve the heritage of Warnell and also create its future,” she said. “Planned giving allows our generous donors to leave a lasting legacy that will make a difference to society and benefit the lives of others, while also enjoying tax benefits and other advantages.”

Previous planned gifts came from the Warnell family and Charles Wheatley, which have funded several school programs. Mrs. Herringdine isn’t the only person to go this route. Holt said there are many reasons why a donor may choose a planned gift over an outright donation, whether it’s a desire to help the school in the absence of the ability to make a current gift, or like David and Janet Terrell, a yearning for preservation.

The Terrells also have no connection to the Warnell School, or even to the University of Georgia. The couple hails from the Atlanta area and Mr. Terrell, in particular, supports Georgia Tech’s athletic teams. But after the couple bought 50 acres in rural Madison County, they looked back at the explosion of development in Gwinnett County and predicted that a construction boom would eventually encroach on their haven in the woods. “We didn’t want that,” he explained.

The Terrells have taken steps to ensure that one day, the Warnell School will own their land, stipulating in their estate plans that the property transfers to the school once they and their heir are deceased. He says their motives for donating the land are “selfish,” because neither he nor his wife ever wanted to see the land destroyed. “We were just thinking what an oasis this could be 50 years from now when there’s development all around it,” Mrs. Terrell said.

The gift comes with stipulations: Once Warnell owns the property, it must be used for teaching and research. It also won’t be open to the public. Mr. Terrell, who is retired from the Gwinnett County School System, witnessed the overdevelopment of Atlanta first-hand. Working in the school district’s site development office, he said, he personally oversaw “a lot of land destroyed.” But he also liked working for the school system, helping kids learn. That’s another reason donating the land to the Warnell School appeals to him, he said, and that’s why they’re already in discussions to allow Warnell students to begin research on the property now. “I like seeing young students hungry to learn,” Mr. Terrell said.

If you are interested in donating to the school or want more information about planned gifts, contact:

Kim Holt, Development Director
(706) 542-3098
kholt@warnell.uga.edu
2008 Homecoming rousing success

The Bulldogs didn’t just trounce Vandy at 2008’s Homecoming. Warnell also had a sweet homecoming success, as more than 300 alumni came back to Athens for some fun, games and partying. The school took the opportunity to unveil the centennial plaque, which recognizes those donors who contributed to Warnell’s Centennial Campaign. Now hanging in the school’s main lobby, the plaque honors those who helped raise more than $180,000 for the school.

But Homecoming also saw more than 100 golfers teeing off in the annual golf tournament, which helped raise more than $10,000 for the Warnell Young Alumni Endowment for Leadership Training. Leading up to the Homecoming game was a Friday night dinner to recognize the staff award winners and distinguished alumni. And on the day of the big football win, many alumni enjoyed a BBQ at Flinchum’s Phoenix before either hopping on a bus to the game or staying at Whitehall to watch the win on two big-screen televisions provided by Warnell. The festivities, Alumni Director Bridget Harden said, were a win for alumni and the school.

(L-R) Jamie Ulmer, Jeff Haber, Dean Mike Clutter and John Lawson. 

Dean Mike Clutter

(L-R) Frank Robertson, Ryan Reddish, Brian Stone and Bob Long.

 Warnell golfers braved the rain to compete in the school’s annual Homecoming golf tournament.

PHOTOS: J.P. BOND
No vision of Warnell’s tomorrow would be possible without the support of our loyal alumni, parents and friends.

Our resources helped create the success of this fine school, and your commitment will continue to guide Warnell as it moves into an ever more challenging future. You as donors are vitally important in enabling Warnell to meet its mission.

In the current economic climate, our students are in need of financial assistance more than ever. We know that they and their families have suffered significant losses in personal investments, and the availability of loan sources has diminished. Therefore, the importance of private funds to provide scholarships and assistantships to recruit and retain the best students is more important than ever. Private support is also crucial to attracting outstanding faculty who are the best within their chosen profession. The best students and faculty allow Warnell to maintain its own economic “stimulus package.”

Intellectual discoveries at our school are commercialized into new products, processes and companies that help create new jobs. We also help prepare students for jobs that a growing and changing economy will require. Has there ever been a more important time in history to educate and train leaders for our future? Even in this economy, our supporters have found ways to continue to invest in us, as they strongly believe that now is not the time for higher education to go backward from excellent to just good enough.

An economy like this makes employers want the best and brightest graduates possible, and Warnell is dedicated to providing the finest scholarship and education. We are grateful for your past gifts, guidance and volunteer leadership. In this time of economic uncertainty, we will rely on you more than ever — on your time, talents and gifts — to help us hold our ground and build new strengths for the future. Now is an excellent time to reaffirm your commitment to Warnell and its mission. I would like to invite each of you to make a contribution to Warnell this year, large or small. An investment in Warnell is an investment in every current and future graduate. With your support, I am confident that we can continue to be one of the top schools in the nation — preparing leaders and answers for tomorrow.
1940s
Roy E. Day received his A.B. degree in math in 1947, the same year his wife Judith received her master’s in psychology. In recent years, they have sent their gifts to the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources in honor of their son Andrew Jonathan Day, 47, a Warnell alumnus.

1950s
Frank E. Craven (BSF ’51) and his wife Millie celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary on Nov. 11. Craven received his 45-year pin from Kiwanis International. He is the first and so far only forester to be elected governor of the Georgia District of Kiwanis International. He has been named a distinguished governor by Kiwanis International, one of the only 13 named worldwide.

Bennie Jack Warren (BSF ’59, MFR ’60) received the 2008 International Forest Engineering Achievement Award from the council on forest engineering at its annual meeting held in Charleston, S.C. Warren was recognized for significant contributions to the field of forest engineering.

1960s
John C. Sherrod (BSF ’60) completed a three-and-a-half-year-term on the City Assembly in Arkansas in October 2008, including a stint as the Deputy Mayor. Sherrod says life is much normal now that he’s no longer a politician.

Sam G. Bulloch, Jr. (BSF ’61) retired after 30 years as an alcohol agent with the Georgia Department of Revenue in February 1997. He now spends his extra time raising beef cows and doing some forestry projects.

1970s
Ron Ferguson (BSF ’70) retired in 2008 as management staff forester following seven years of service with North Carolina Forest Service and 27 years with the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

Roger Mull (BSFR ’71) relocated to Missoula, Montana, in 2007 after more than 20 years of working on the coast of South Carolina. He spent summers during college working as a smokejumper in Missoula. He is now the owner of Montana Planning Group, LLC, a registered investment advisor.

1980s
Pete Stewart (BSFR ’82) was recently featured in The Business Journal as its entrepreneur pick. He is the founder, president and chief executive of Forest2Market, Inc. Upon graduating in 1992 and serving as a procurement coordinator at Champion International and a technical services manager at Canal Forest Resources in 2000, he went out on his own to become a successful businessman providing products and services to the forest-products industry.

Mike Matre (BSFR ’96) lives in Albany, Ga., with his wife Joy and daughters, Parker and Emma. He and his wife are eagerly anticipating another addition to the family, another daughter due in early 2009. Mike is president of the Matre Forestry Consulting, Inc. and holds a real estate license with Needmore Properties.

2000s
Katie Myszka (BSFR Wildlife ’02) is currently working at the Regional Associate for the Student Conservation Association’s southwest regional office in Oakland, Calif. She was married this past fall in Oakland to David Wolfe, who earned a BFA in photography from UGA in 2002.

David D. James (BSFR ’03) works as a wood procurement forester for Domtar Paper Company in Hawesville, Ky., purchasing chips and managing certification schemes. He also serves as the current president of the Indiana Forest Industries Council.

Capt. Jensen Basenberg (BSFR ’04) is in the U.S. Army serving in the Middle East. He is currently the pilot of an Apache helicopter in Baghdad.


Adam Speir (BSFR Water and Soil ’06, MS ’08) is working with the Cooperative Extension Service as an Ag Pollution Prevention Specialist out of Bio and Ag Engineering in Athens, Ga. He is coordinating a program known as the Partnership for a Sustainable Georgia-AgTrack. He married Kellie Sapp of Athens on Aug. 23, 2008.

Megan Dempster (BSFR ’07) is living in Nelson County, Va., and is employed at Pharsalia, a working farm and historic plantation that holds events and weddings. Dempster has applied for a $4,000 grant to do an ecological survey on the Tye River and volunteers with the Rockfish Valley Foundation, which supports local agri-tourism.

Ami Flowers (BSFR Wildlife ’08) travelled to South Africa after graduation and worked as the teaching assistant for the study abroad program there. Once the course was completed, she began working with EcoTraining as a back-up Field Guide to the instructors for six months. Flowers plans to continue her education and get a master’s degree, so she will be back at Warnell soon. She will be researching for her master’s project in South Africa with Drs. John Carroll and Gary Green.

Robert Farris (BSFR ’84) was appointed director of the Georgia Forestry Commission late last year. Farris, who joined the GFC in 1985 and has worked in various positions with the agency over the past two decades, will oversee the state’s forest resources in his new job. He didn’t realize how much time indoors his career would require when he was a student at Warnell, Farris said. “I think I probably entered into the forestry school with the same perception a lot of others have, that I’d be out working in the woods all the time,” he said. A native of Atlanta, Farris has four children with his wife, Beverly.

As director of the GFC, Farris is entrusted with maintaining healthy and sustainable Georgia forests and ensuring an abundant forest product. The agency recently released a report to the state’s general assembly that found that Georgia’s forests are being sustainably managed but face threats from a demanding population growth. Urban sprawl, Farris said, is the state’s No. 1 forestry challenge. Farris touted the GFC’s new fire protection program and efforts to curb arson in Georgia’s forests, which accounts for 17 percent of forest fires. Arson-started forest fires, he said, costs Georgia $5 million a year.

We Want To Know What You’re Doing These Days!
Please send updated employment information, personal achievements, family changes and new addresses to:
Alumni Office
Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602
Fax: (706) 542.8356
E-mail: news@warnell.uga.edu
Horace B. Mathias (BSFR ‘42) died on July 17, 2008, at 86 after an extended illness. Mr. Mathias graduated with honors from the University of Georgia in 1942. He went on to join the Army-Air Force where he served as a meteorologist during World War II. After being honorably discharged in 1946, Mathias was employed by Macon Kraft Company in Macon, Ga. In 1952, he moved to Rome, Ga., where he became a founding employee of Rome Kraft Company, now Georgia Kraft Company, and remained there until his retirement in 1985. He was an active member of First Presbyterian Church, Rome, where he served on the Board of Deacons and was Sunday School Treasurer. He is survived by his sister, Virginia, and daughter, Julia.

Bruce Engle Beck (BSFR ’69), of Lawrenceville, died at age 61 on Jan. 27, 2009. After graduating in 1969, he was employed by the UGA Cooperative Extension Service. In 1970, he joined the U.S. Army, where he served for two years. He joined the National Guard in 1972 and went on to get his Master’s of Agriculture Extension from UGA in 1978. Mr. Beck retired from the Extension Service as director of Cobb County in 1997 and retired from the National Guard in 2002. He is survived by his wife Anne, son Albert and brother Tom.

William Hosking (BSFR ’72) died after a brave battle with leukemia on Aug. 5, 2008. He graduated with a Bachelor of Forest Resources in 1972 and went on to get a Master and Ph.D. in Agriculture Economics. He worked as a professor and economist at the Auburn University Marine Extension and Research center, where he retired in 1998. Mr. Hosking is survived by his wife, Evie; mother, Kate; and children, Kathy, Beverly, Edward and Cecilia.

Col. Michael Lee Kelley (BSFR ’79) died on Sept. 4, 2008, at the age of 52. Retired from the U.S. Marines, Mr. Kelley was a member of the First Baptist Church of LaFayette, Ga., and was employed with the Georgia Forestry Service in Rome, Ga. He is survived by his wife Cynthia Kelley; daughters, Sarah Lee Kelley and Laura Frances Kelley; father Michael Francis Kelley; mother Carolyn Pogue Kelley; and brothers, Pat Kelley and James Kelley.

Ben Allen Sanders, Sr. (BSFR ’66) died on Jan. 14, 2009. Mr. Sanders joined the U.S. Navy and was stationed aboard a destroyer ship that served as escort for a carrier in the Gulf of Tonkin. His ship was fired on, which is recognized as the start of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. He went on to work for the U.S. Forest Service where he was assigned to national forests in Alabama, Florida and North Carolina, and later joined the staff in Gainesville, Ga., retiring from there as a wildlife biologist. Mr. Sanders is survived by his children, Ben and Leigh Ann.

David W. Peterson (BSFR ’51, MF ’57) died on July 8, 2008. He earned a Bachelor of Forest Resources in 1951 and a Master of Forest Resources in 1957. He was a member of the Alpha Eta chapter of the agricultural fraternity Alpha Gamma Rho.

Jim Fortson dies at 76: Long time faculty member had great influence on Warnell, Terry schools

This past January, Warnell lost one of our most talented and respected faculty members – Jim Fortson. Below is the eulogy presented at his funeral. We will miss Jim and the many other faculty members that have contributed so much to Warnell over the past 100 years. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Fortson family.

By MIKE CLUTTER
Dean, Warnell School

I am honored and privileged to say a few words about Jim Fortson – a devoted husband, father and grandfather, a devout Christian, an impassioned Bulldawg, and a superlative redneck academician – among many other things! And he was damn fine with a chainsaw. To me personally, Jim was a gentleman, a mentor, an educator I have tried to emulate and a second dad when I needed one. To fully appreciate and understand Jim it is important to understand his roots and beginnings. Jim was raised, appropriately in Fortson, Ga., in rural Muscogee County around Columbus. He spent the first eight years of his education in a one-room school house before completing high school in neighboring Baker County. After a couple of years in the Naval Academy and the U.S. Navy, Jim entered UGA and completed a B.S. in Animal Science and a M.S. in Ag Economics. A couple of National Science Foundation fellowships in experimental statistics at Iowa State and Oklahoma State, along with a IBM fellowship in New York, launched a career in many things quantitative.

His career at UGA was started based upon his skills as a computer programmer and computer systems analyst at a time when computers cost
millions of dollars and consisted of vacuum tubes. It was scary — the guy could write computer code on computer coding sheets like the rest of us jot out a grocery list. He is generally credited with starting computer programming classes here at Georgia. Jim taught me both FORTRAN and SAS — although my Dad may question his effectiveness! He was the first administrative computer manager for UGA and was generally viewed for many years as the IBM mainframe computer guru on campus — when things went south Jim was the first phone call that was made. In 1968 he completed a Ph.D. in corporate finance under the direction of Bob Dince and started a long and successful career as a faculty member in both the Terry College of Business and the Warnell School. Recognized many times in both schools as a superlative teacher, Jim truly loved the teaching aspects of his career. Similarly, Dr. Fortson was an integral part of a team that developed and implemented some forest planning techniques that made a huge impact on timberland ownership and management around the world – but particularly here in the south. These techniques and the software that was developed added hundreds of millions of dollars to timberland owners’ balance sheets. Jim was also integral to the development of the Plantation Management Research Cooperative – a UGA / industry research partnership that has raised millions of dollars in research funds for pine plantation management research. Jim served as the director of this effort for more than 10 years starting in 1984. All of this work was accomplished without any formal education in forest resources. He was one of the most talented forest managers that I have ever worked with. He made similar contributions in the Terry College. He served on the board of advisors for the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta for many years and even worked for the Fed while teaching for a short period of time. Given our current financial woes I wish Jim was still around to provide some of that classic Fortson guidance and wisdom.

I say all of this to give you a sense of the man’s intellect and knowledge base. It is not uncommon in Athens to meet extraordinarily well-educated and successful academicians. However, it is uncommon when they possess that kind of knowledge in three different fields of study – that was Jim Fortson. Many a concerned graduate student, including myself, wondered how he had such a diverse knowledge base upon which to draw. This view generally manifested itself most strongly late at night in preparation for oral exams.

Over the past few days I have talked with many of Jim’s students, colleagues, acquaintances, and quickly we have found ourselves swapping stories, “Fortsonisms” as they were from our collective experiences. Jim always marveled at the academic environment – a place where he thrived but at times stayed puzzled with its structure and function. He was one of the most practical, well-grounded individuals I ever had the opportunity to know and work with, particularly in an environment where, at times, these attributes can be hard to find. Jim always maintained that common sense was, in fact, uncommon. He always called it “walkin’ around sense”. He had great respect for those with good walkin’ around sense. One of the greatest contributions Jim always provided was that walkin’ around sense.

No discussion of Jim would be complete without some recognition of his love for all things Bulldawg. When Georgia lost it would take days to find that normal affable Dr. Fortson again. He could never stay mad at anyone for very long, but he always said, “I harbor ill will only against Florida, Auburn and Georgia Tech.” Last Thursday night was not a good evening for Jim (Florida won) and we found out we had lost a great friend.

At times like these I find myself pondering what heaven may be like. For Jim, I end up with a vision of the Bulldawg, Yellow Jacket, Falcons, Braves Inn – a local establishment in Brunswick that we frequented on trips to the field to measure studies down in the flat woods. We would try our hand at the pool table, play some shuffle board, and replenish our fluid levels after a long hot day in the field. But most importantly, we got to listen to guys like Jim Fortson dispense their wisdom, talk about their experiences and come to appreciate their views. I think heaven for Jim – and myself – may involve a few of these experiences.

The other day my 7-year-old Maggie asked me how long I had been in school. After considerable thought and the use of a large computer, I arrived at the correct number (I think): 23 years. She offered a hypothesis that I must have been pretty slow. Maggie’s pretty smart — she possesses that walkin’ around sense. However, in that time as a student Jim Fortson was simply the best teacher I ever had. He loved it! 🌟
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