

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Here Be Dragons

We were talking to our friend and financial advisor the other day. It wasn't a long conversation because there is not that much to discuss. Nevertheless, it's good to have the best maps available for navigating the treacherous and unknown waters of this strange and less than wonderful economy.

At the end of the conversation I thanked him for improving our chances for a successful journey and for shrinking those "Here Be Dragons" areas on the map. I always find it to be a mood enhancing experience when someone understands one of my obscure literary or historical references, and our friend and advisor did not disappoint. He remembered the old maps where uncharted regions of the world fed myth and rumor and were labeled with the phrase that introduced this discussion.

It got me thinking, it did. In this time of satellite imagery and surveillance, one would be hard pressed to find a dragon on a conventional map of the world. There is hardly a square foot on the surface of the planet that hasn't been mapped, categorized and filed away for potential exploitation and monetization.

I have a Google Street View image of a former neighbor sitting peacefully in her front yard in my old neighborhood. The photo is a treasure now that she has passed on, but it also reminds me that the mysteries of human interactions are being mapped as fast as the surveillance state can manage.

Our species has always been driven to solve mysteries. We are intrigued by the unknown but at the same time we can't tolerate it. We fear it, therefore we want to control it, and now that we control, we believe, the conventional maps of the surface, we seek to slay the dragons of human behavior and map out those corners previously marked "Here Be Privacy."

Privacy doesn't seem to be an issue for the ones destined to take the rudder someday. Many think nothing of broadcasting the most intimate details of their private (pause for irony) lives. These are my labels and my pronouns. See me, and you are required to like what you see. Pay particular attention to my wounds and scars and cut me some slack because of them. I want my Facebook friends to know what I had for dinner, and what medications I'm taking. I like this and this and that. Perhaps someone watching will suggest something I can buy that is compatible with my likes and dislikes.

Those who fear the unknowns of we, the unwashed masses, our uncontrolled interactions and what remains of our unmonitored behavior, are intent on taking full advantage of this culture that advertises empowerment but sells gratification, weakness and self absorption.

There are other maps, however, not commonly known outside of scientific circles and by those of us still capable of study and discernment. There is vast unknown territory suggested by those maps. Science is venturing inward, beneath the atom, past the neutrino, the quark, the lepton, the boson, the graviton, to the realm of the Creator. It ventures outward past the planets and deep into the past, beyond the supermassive black hole at the center of our galaxy, to countless galaxies beyond imagining – to meet that Creator once again. As above, so below, said the ancients, and we still have pioneers intent on exploring these uncharted territories.

Back home on our unique and irreplaceable planet, there are still dragons to be found, though we might not be aware of them. We begin to understand that our planet is not the safe and quiet place for indulging our passions that we had come to believe it was. It can change rapidly. The climate changes, with or without our help. The sun itself is not a serenely glowing and benevolent constant. It lashes out on a schedule that our civilization does not remember, with a power that can erase that memory in an instant.

If we were more cognizant of this map, we might turn our efforts toward those elements of humanity that make us strong, resilient and resourceful. Instead, we indulge in gratifications and our addiction to unnecessary drama of our own creation.

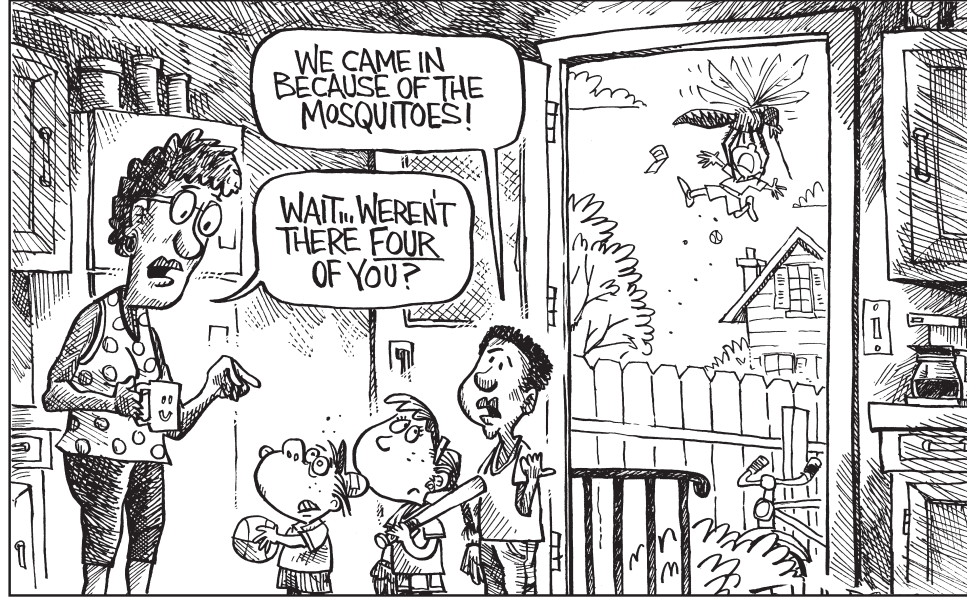
We swim in a soup of chemical effluent, the byproduct of our addictions. We have soaked the planet in hormone disrupting chemicals. They are everywhere and inescapable. They are in the food chain, the groundwater, the things we wear and touch, the air we breathe and even the rain that falls.

Living creatures respond to their environments. They mutate, evolve, or devolve accordingly. Of all the waste products of our civilization, just this one category of "forever chemicals" is linked to obesity, cancer, gender dysphoria and feminization of male species, accelerated puberty, mood disorders and decreased fertility. There is evidence that much of what we see on the nightly shooting report and banded about in the political theater can be linked in some measure to the chemical load we have imposed upon ourselves. Here be dragons indeed.

Thank God, then, for the explorers that remain, and for the ones who endeavor to hold the line and provide safe harbor for the adventurers who will lead us into the undiscovered territory of the future.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com



North Georgia Prescribed Fire Council

The mission of the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council is: To protect the right, to encourage the use of, and to promote public understanding of prescribed fire.

Prescribed fires are used by such a variety of individuals, agencies, and organizations throughout the state that the Southwest Georgia Prescribed Fire Council was established in 2002 in a regional effort to encourage the exchange of information, techniques, and experience among practitioners. In January of 2007, the steering committee, working with all partners, decided to expand, and become the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council. The state meeting has been held in Tifton each year in September with 300 or so attendees. Tifton is too far for most of us up here to travel for a one-day meeting, so we developed the North Georgia Prescribed Fire Council which is just a branch of the state council.

In June each year since 2018, the North Georgia Prescribed Fire Council has held its annual meeting in Jasper where 300 or so foresters, landowners, consultants, and others who use prescribed fire to manage their forests gather to share experiences and learn about new techniques for managing fire in their woodlands.

Fire is a natural phenomenon that has occurred in our forests since the beginning of time and maintains a natural balance in the environment. Some of our well-intentioned ancestors decided that they knew better how to maintain the environment than mother nature, so they created programs to extinguish all fires in the forest. Smokey Bear was the main culprit and used to say, "Only YOU can prevent Forest Fires!" and our firefighters worked hard to extinguish all fires in the forest which has led to build up of fuels that contributes to the out of control wildfires that we have today. Only recently has Smokey Bear changed his motto to "Only YOU can prevent Wildfires!" In some areas such as parts of California changing the message is too late and now with the build-up of years of fuels, they are experiencing the largest, hottest, longest, and most expensive wildfires in history.

The Georgia & North Georgia Prescribed Fire Council members promote the wise use of planned and controlled fire to get our forests back in line with the way nature intended it to be. This platform allows the council to be engaged in prescribed fire advocacy across the state. Frequent fires, set by lightning strikes and Native Americans, have shaped Georgia's ecosystems for thousands of years. Our forest ecosystems evolved with fire and continue to need the strategic application of fire that mimics this natural cycle. The plants and animals of the pine woods are accustomed to frequent fires and depend on these fires for their survival. Fire is as natural as sunshine, rain and wind in many plant communities including upland pine, pine flatwoods, marshes and wet prairies. Fire also benefits many of the rare animal species in our state that are declining. Some of these declines are caused almost totally by fire exclusion. Frequent fires prevent the build-up of flammable fuels in the forest that set the stage for destructive wildfires when ignition does occur. "Prescribed burning means the controlled application of fire to existing vegetative fuels under specific environmental conditions and following appropriate precautionary measures, which causes the fire to be confined to a predetermined area and accomplishes one or more planned land management objectives, or to mitigate catastrophic wildfires." Georgia Prescribed Burning Act, 1992. Prescribed burning is carried out by experienced, trained, and certified practitioners on both public and private lands throughout Georgia. These professionals assess forest conditions, determine the type of fire needed, and then write a "prescription" for the application of fire. Great care is taken by prescribed fire managers to minimize any temporary inconveniences created by smoke. Smoke management plans for prescribed burns are designed so that smoke-sensitive areas like roads and residences, etc. are not negatively affected by the burn. Smoke from prescribed fires does not contribute appreciably to air quality issues since the practice typically avoids times of stagnant summer air. However, uncontrolled wildfires usually occur during the summer when there is already a bad urban air quality problem.

We can reduce the risk of wildfires and the resulting smoke or air quality problems with well-timed prescribed fires. No other tool can so effectively remove the hazardous build-up of woodland fuels and help maintain our forests. Anyone interested in forest health and prescribed fires is welcome to register for the North Georgia Prescribed Fire Council meeting on June 22nd this week. Check the Georgia Prescribed Fire website garxfire.com for more information on prescribed fire and registration information.

This year the meeting will be at the Chattahoochee Technical College in Jasper on June 22nd. The public is welcome. The registration fee is \$35 which covers breakfast and lunch and all of the meeting Topics covered will be all aspects of "prescribing" and putting fire on the ground to reduce fuel loads. Topics include effects on wildlife, water quality, smoke management, fire weather, where to get help for prescribed fire, air quality impacts, and the importance of prescribed fire in the #1 Forestry State in the nation, Georgia. Come out and join us in Jasper on the 22nd.

RC&D
Executive Director

Frank Riley



Japanese Beetles

The Japanese beetles will soon be out in full force. I spotted the first few last week. They are a huge pest as they munch their way through your yard. Controlling them can be challenging because they are such voracious eaters. Let's talk about some strategies for lessening their impact.

Japanese beetles arrived in the U.S. 1916. They have spread to much of the East coast and across the Mississippi River. They will feed on a wide range of ornamentals, fruit trees, vegetables, and shade trees. Feeding on such a wide range of plants means that your yard may look like an all you can eat buffet to them. They have a metallic green color on their abdomen. They look similar to June beetles. June beetles are typically about 1.5 to twice as large as Japanese beetles. Japanese beetles also have a row of five white dots along the side of the abdomen that can be used to differentiate them from other beetles. The damage that you see from them looks like skeletonizing of the leaves. They'll eat everything between the leaf vein, but leave the veins.

Thankfully, Japanese beetles only have a single generation each year. Usually the adults, which are the beetles that we see flying around eating leaves, will begin to appear in May – June. They live four to six weeks. The females will lay eggs for most of their adult life. The eggs are laid in the soil. They hatch in about two weeks. After hatching, the beetles live in the soil until they come back out as adults in May.

There are three times a year that are most ideal for controlling Japanese beetles. The most obvious is when they are adults and are out feeding on leaves. You can use carbaryl, which is the active ingredient in Sevin to control adults. Sevin comes as a liquid or in dust form. If you don't have a heavy infestation you can also use a cup with soapy water in it. Knock Japanese beetles off plants into the cup and they will drown. The second time to control Japanese beetles is in September. By that time of year all the Japanese beetles are grubs living in the soil. Even as grubs they can do damage to turf by feeding on the roots. Milky spore is an organic product that can be used to kill grubs in the ground. It's a bacterium that feeds on Japanese beetle grubs after they ingest it. September is the optimal time to make a milky spore application. The third time to control Japanese beetles would be in the spring with another milky spore application. Soil temperatures need to be over 65 for milky spore to be effective. The grubs must ingest the milky spore for it to be work. It only works on grubs, so applying it while the beetles are out eating leaves won't kill any Japanese beetles.

Using milky spore to kill the grubs doesn't mean that you won't have any Japanese beetles the following year, but you can significantly reduce the population that is present in your area. Some people will use traps to kill Japanese beetles. I try to discourage people from this practice because traps with pheromone lures will bring beetles in from five miles away, meaning that you have more beetles.

If you have questions about Japanese beetles contact your county Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

UGA extension
UNION COUNTY
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Letters To The Editor

Ms. Elaine's House

Dear Editor,

Just a note to the Towns County Community for the help given to Ms. Elaine's House and the women affected by drug addiction. We started almost 20 years ago by taking bibles to the Union County, Towns County, and Clay County Jails. Those bibles were furnished mostly by McConnell Baptist and Hiwassee UMC. What we saw was a group of women trapped in the justice system as well as sick from the addictions.

When we gathered a group from surrounding churches, of all denominations, there was an overwhelming response. It seems that many people have a personal whelming to be interested in the problems related to addiction. Seven churches agreed to furnish a room with furniture, etc. The decision was made to go to the Accountability Courts for recommendations and to assist them with their programs. The courts cannot partner with Christian organizations but we can come along side to be part of solution to the problem.

The Accountability Courts have counselors, teachers, security, and classes so that we did not have to re-invent the wheel. This has worked out well. Even with the interruption of COVID-19, some have been led into a life of sobriety and free from the court systems. Since we do not take government funds but rely on community to help, it has been amazing to see the response in this diverse place that we live. Volunteers have brought food, given rides, given gifts, provided some counseling and personal support to the women who live here as well as those who are just caught up in the justice system. A special thanks to the courts and to law enforcement for all they do.

The Almost There, Inc. Board governs the accountability of donations, makes the rules, maintains the house, and supplies the needs of the women in the house. We have learned that most addictions are caused by a heart condition that needs to be healed by a loving environment as well as a program with structure.

Sue McEver

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Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor

P.O. Box 365, Hiwassee, GA 30546

Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net

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