



The Chattooga Quarterly

Spring ❖❖ 2005

The Wonders of Spring



*Catawba Rhododendron in the Chattooga watershed
photograph by Peter McIntosh*

I n s i d e

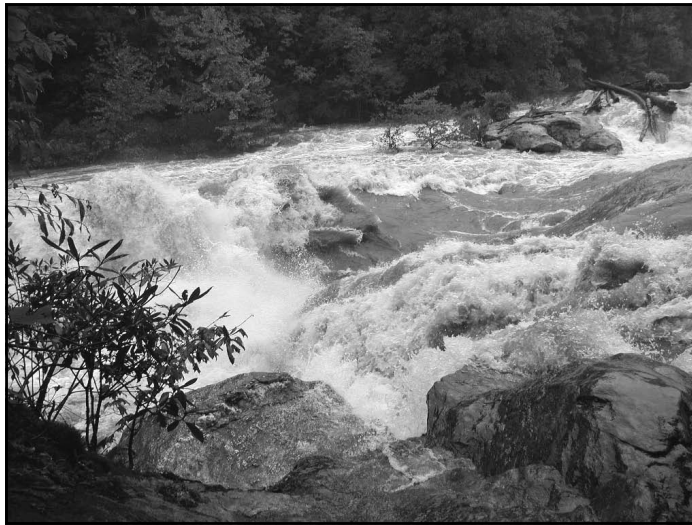
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Director's Page

Buzz Williams

As you may have noticed, each Chattooga Quarterly has a general theme. Sometimes we focus on the natural cycle of the season or occasionally, we feature a particular hot topic or issue. Articles feature themes in line with our mission to promote conservation and the cultural heritage of the Chattooga watershed. This one is simply about the wonders of the season and includes an article about our unique Rhododendrons, another about the inspiration we get from birds in music and language, and an article about the remarkable springtime visit to the Chattooga River watershed by Sir Alexander Cuming 275 years ago.

Springtime is about celebrating the awakening of life forces from a long winter's dormancy. It is also a time to clean house, plant seeds and to reorganize and begin new projects. As in nature, organizations also need to follow cycles to stay healthy. The Chattooga Conservancy has undergone many cleansing and re-organization cycles. We recently received a letter from one of our members that reflects on the founding of our organization. It is interesting from the perspective of how much we have changed but yet have stayed true to our original mission:



Bull Sluice at 8.5 feet, in the fall of 2004.

Editors,

I first saw the Chattooga River about thirty years ago, shortly after it became a Wild & Scenic River. The water level was thirteen feet, a record breaking flood. The only trail to Bull Sluice rapid was under water, so getting there required scrambling a half-mile through undergrowth and over large rocks. A final ascent through laurel thickets brought my group to where we could hang onto trees and look, the ground trembling with the roar and crash of the flood only a few feet away. It was impressive but I couldn't understand why some folks were delirious with excitement, exclaiming and shouting, pointing to a massive outcropping of rock that was invisible to me, buried as it was under tons of what looked like churning chocolate milk.

Today Bull Sluice is accessible to almost anyone; the trash that accumulates there a sad testament to its popularity. A large, paved parking lot and manicured path leads thousands every year—raft customers, kayakers, locals and tourists—to where they can view a class V rapid on a world-class river. And it's a sight to see throughout the year at any water level. Thanks to the federal government through our national forests and the Wild & Scenic Rivers

Act, this magnificent area belongs to everyone. And thanks to conservation groups, it remains relatively pristine.

Twenty-plus years ago there was controversy over construction of that parking lot and trail. Arguments against the location went unheeded, yet when it was finished the designers realized...the trail ends at the top of a hazardous rapid (right where I watched the flood). It was then declared to be an attractive nuisance. More plans were made to blast and rearrange boulders into a 'natural-appearing barrier' to keep out those who had followed the trail in. A new, local conservation group (Friends of the Chattooga) argued that enough was enough. Their success centered around preserving those rocks and boulders wanted as building blocks. The recent thirteen foot flood was an undeniable reminder that they are indeed part of the river bed and thus protected under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Bull Sluice remains intact.

So, too, does the Chattooga River. We are fortunate indeed to have such a wondrous playground in our backyard. This spring we celebrate the anniversary of its Wild & Scenic status, the preservation of one of the few remaining free-flowing rivers, and the undeveloped wilderness that remains along its banks.

While we're at it, let's also celebrate the people who research and protest, lobby politicians and confront bureaucrats, decipher legalese and trek through forests of government reports. Let's celebrate that early conservation group that evolved into the Chattooga Conservancy.

-Mary Brockman Collins

Mary's letter is insightful. As she correctly states, the Chattooga Conservancy did indeed evolve from that event in 1979 when a small group of young river guides took on a powerful federal agency to stop an ill conceived project to build "bleachers" at Bull Sluice rapid on the Chattooga River. In short, we won a fight that set a major precedent for citizen involvement in management of the watershed to adhere to the guiding principles of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This spring, as we look for new ways to be good stewards of the Chattooga River watershed, we welcome your ideas and thoughts on how we can reinvent ourselves to remain a healthy, vibrant organization. We also hope you enjoy the Spring 2005 *Chattooga Quarterly*.

The Amazing Rhododendron

Carol Greenberger

Lining much of the Chattooga River, with intertwined branches creating an almost impenetrable wall of dark green leaves, and thousands of buds waiting to burst forth in pink and purple showy blossoms, is the amazing rhododendron. There are more than 850 different wild species of rhododendron, although only a few are native to North America. William Bartram and Andre Michaux, two eighteenth century naturalists and explorers, helped introduce the rhododendron of the southern Appalachians to the rest of the world.

William Bartram, son of botanist John Bartram, first explored part of the region with his father in 1765 on a plant-gathering trip financed by King George III. They traveled through present-day North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, focusing primarily on the St. Johns River near St. Augustine. Gardening was a very popular pastime in Europe, and the novel, exotic flora of the New World fascinated many Europeans. They relied on colonial botanists to supply them with specimens – seeds, drawings and live root cultures – that were then classified and named. By 1776 over 600 native species were identified and sent to Europe, and John Bartram was personally responsible for about a quarter of the finds. The King recognized John as a Royal Botanist for the mainland North American colonies.

In 1773 William Bartram returned to the southeast, traveling 2,400 miles on a solitary expedition through the wilderness of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. William traveled farther up the Savannah River on this trip, into the Appalachian Mountains. He spent four years collecting specimens, drawing and keeping a journal of his observations, later published in his book, *Travels*. Bartram described the woods of northern Georgia as “burning” with the late spring glow of the Flame Azalea, *Rhododendron calendulaceum*. With flowers ranging from clear yellow, through shades of orange, to brilliant red, the Flame Azalea is one of the most spectacular native shrubs of the Appalachian Mountains. Many of Bartram’s specimens, sent back periodically to London for identification, were never recorded or published, so the Flame Azalea was named by Michaux who collected it in 1795 from the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.



*The Catawba Rhododendron grows mostly on bald mountaintops at higher elevations (above 5000').
Painting by Mark Catesby, circa 1720.*

One of the most common rhododendron in the southern Appalachians, the Catawba, was discovered in the 1790s by Andre Michaux. Michaux was sent to America by France to search for new species of trees to rebuild France’s forests, which had been stripped of timber to build warships. Michaux met William Bartram in America and the men formed a friendship based on their mutual interests in botany and exploration. They kept in touch, exchanging letters and seeds. Michaux was inspired by Bartram’s stories of his exploration of the southern Appalachian region and the lure of new plants to be found there.

Michaux made Charleston, South Carolina his base of operations in 1787, so he frequently traveled in Georgia and the Carolinas. His expeditions to the mountains of the Carolinas were especially successful. Enticed by the possibility of discovering new plants, Michaux followed local guides up the slopes of Grandfather Mountain, Roan Mountain, the peaks of Table Rock and other peaks in this remote region. High in the mountains near the headwaters of the Catawba River Michaux identified a magnificent shrub with flowers that turned entire mountain peaks into vast oceans of purple blossoms. He named it *Rhododendron catawbiense* for the river that led him to the discovery.

The Catawba Rhododendron grows mostly on bald mountaintops at higher elevations (above 5000') and spectacular displays can be viewed from late May to late June. On Roan Mountain, straddling the North Carolina and Tennessee state line, is a 600-acre natural rhododendron garden - the largest in the world. It draws thousands of visitors in June, when the shrubs are covered with hundreds of thousands of blooms in shades of red, pink and many gradations of lavender. An Indian legend recounts a great battle that was waged on top of Roan Mountain, where so much blood spilled that the flowers turned from white to red.

Another beauty native to our region, the Great Laurel or Rosebay, *Rhododendron maximum*, can be found mostly along streams in the understory of mountain forests, forming dense thickets. They have short, crooked trunks, with broad, rounded crowns of many stout, crooked branches, and large

The Amazing Rhododendron

white blossoms tinted with pink. The title "maximum" was given to this plant due to the size a mature specimen may grow to – normally standing at 15 feet, plants can achieve a tree-like height of 40 feet. The Red *maximum*, discovered in the Mount Mitchell area, has flowers that may vary in color from year to year, and also on a single shrub, from branch to branch. Because the range of the Catawba and the Maximum overlap, natural hybrids have occurred in the wild.

In contrast to the *maximum* is the Dwarf Rhododendron, *R. Minus*, usually attaining a height of three to six feet. Native from the mountain tops to coastal plains of Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama this smaller species can be found along streams and rocky ridges. Andre Michaux described the species in 1792, naming it "minus" meaning smaller, most likely referring to the size of its leaves as compared to *R. maximum*.

The Swamp Azalea, *R. viscosum* can be found along the banks of the Chattooga River and throughout the watershed. Its white, fragrant flowers have pistils that are noticeably longer than their stamens. It is also known as Swamp Honeysuckle or Clammy Azalea. With blooms opening in June and fall foliage of orange to maroon, the Swamp Azalea offers color for much of the year.

Found in the spruce forests of only a few counties in western North Carolina at elevations of 3,000 to 5,500 feet is the Pink-Shell Azalea, *R. vaseyi*. Discovered in 1878 by George Vasey, the pink-shell is one of the first to bloom in spring, opening in mid to late May. Grandfather Mountain has the largest natural population of this endangered species.

Rhododendrons are members of the Heath family. This group contains plants such as heather, mountain laurel, blueberries, azaleas and many others. Their range extends from peaks over 5000 feet where they get sun, plenty of moisture and cooler temperatures, to lower elevation creek coves, where deep shade and moist conditions are found. Rhododendrons are an amazingly variable genus. Some are ground hugging while others can grow to tree height. Glossy leaves may be a centimeter long to over a meter. Flowers vary from clusters of small, bell-shaped to round, large blossoms, in pink, purple, white or red. The plants can be evergreen or deciduous, losing their leaves after the growing season. Rhododendron comes from the Greek *rhodo*, meaning "rose," and *dendron*, meaning "tree." Rhododendrons are typically divided into two broad groups: rhododendrons and azaleas.

Azaleas are a specific group within the Genus *Rhododendron*, and are mostly native to

North America. Azaleas have smaller leaves than rhododendron and tend to sprawl rather than growing upright. The Pinxter Azalea, *Rhododendron canescens*, found in the woods and along creeks and streams, is one of the earliest bloomers in our region. Its long stamens, beautiful white or pink blossoms and delicate aroma make this member of the rhododendron family a treat to encounter.

The leaves and flowers of all rhododendrons are poisonous. The first written account of rhododendrons comes from Greece in 400 B.C. It relates to the poisoning of ten thousand soldiers by honey made from *Rhododendron luteum*. Rhododendron poisoning has since been confirmed repeatedly. A poisonous compound is found in rhododendron nectar, producing low blood pressure, shock and even death. In spite of, or perhaps because of that characteristic, rhododendron was once taken in minute quantities to treat heart disease. American Indians used the rhododendron medicinally by including crushed leaves in poultices to treat headaches and rheumatism. The wood from rhododendron also found use in early America. Due to its great strength, the wood was used for tool handles.

The native rhododendron is one of the southern Appalachians treasures. A hike along any creek, river or stream in the Chattooga watershed takes you through tangled thickets of rhododendron lining their banks. A favorite spot of mine on a nearby creek is along a bank at a rock-strewn bend in the rippling stream. The rich, moist bottomland, thickly carpeted with ferns and moss, is overgrown with twisted, gnarled rhododendron forming a dense canopy over my head, transporting me to the magical land of hobbits and gnomes. All thanks to the amazing rhododendron.



Rhododendron canescens, the Pinxter azalea, usually blooms in April.

Alexander Cuming

Alexander Cuming An examination of contemporary documents

*Matthew Allen Newsome
curator and manager, Scottish Tartans Museum, Franklin, NC*

In the spring of 1730 a Scottish nobleman, on no authority but his own, came into Cherokee territory during a time of general hostility and forever altered the course of Anglo-Cherokee relations. This man was Sir Alexander Cuming, Baronet of Culter, and his story has been told often in the hills of southern Appalachia, especially in Macon County, North Carolina, where Nikwasi Mound still marks the site of his fateful visitation. Many call Cuming a hero. Many say he was mad. Beneath the stories, however, lies a real individual and it is that individual I intend to uncover.

We know a few hard facts about Cuming from the memoir he wrote in 1764, towards the end of his life. He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on December 18th, 1691. When he was only 12 years old he obtained a Captain's commission from Queen Anne in the Earl of Mar regiment (May 28, 1703). In 1713 he attained Doctor of Law at the University of Aberdeen. During the Jacobite uprising of 1715, he led a company against the Jacobites. He later became a lawyer after the rebellion subsided, and in 1719 he was summoned into the employ of the Duke of Argyll, who paid him 300 pounds per annum from Royal Funds.

Life seemed to be going quite well with the young lawyer. He remained in Argyll's employ until the Christmas of 1721. He was then offered the Governorship of Bermuda, but later denied it. In 1725 Cuming's father died, making him the second Baronet of Culter. Cuming now had lands and a title, and was set on making a better name for himself. It is at this point in the story that his ambitions begin to get the better of him.

Cuming was a candidate in 1727 for a position in the Shire of Aberdeen, but did not win the election. This was perhaps when he set his sights on making his name with out the British Isles. He was an elected fellow of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge and had, as he himself put it, "His Majesty's Leave of Absence to travel where he pleased." In September of 1729, he took advantage of this freedom and set sail for the Carolinas.

What he hoped to accomplish there is not completely understood. Macon County historian Barbara McRae says that Cuming claimed to have made the trip overseas because

of a strange, prophetic dream that his wife had. She had dreamed that Alexander would accomplish great things among the Cherokees of the New World, and it was this vision that inspired him to sail across the ocean and serve as a diplomat in dangerous territory, with no authority from his government. Cuming himself wrote in his journal that he established the silver standard for the economy in Charles Town. Regardless of his intent, we know that he arrived in Charles Town (present day Charleston, South Carolina) in the first week of December and left on March 13, 1730, for Cherokee territory.

Cuming's own account of his travels in his Memoirs is scant. He simply states that he established himself as their law giver, met with the emperor Moytoy of Tellico [Telliko], and was gifted the crown of their nation and the scalps of their enemies. His letters written closer to the time, however, paint a more detailed picture of his journey. With the help of these and other accounts, it is possible to

put together a cohesive timeline of his travels.

At the time of his departure, the Cherokees were on the verge of allying themselves with the French, and were by all accounts rather hostile towards the British. Cuming was definitely aware of the situation with the French, as he recalled that year to the Duke of Newcastle in a

letter. This knowledge definitely did not stop Cuming from venturing deep into what he called the "Cherokee Mountains." There are some that would suggest he was fleeing financial peril. Others believe he was seeking yet again a great name.

He came first to the Lower Towns, where he met with a council at Keowee. There he knelt in the council house and demanded all others kneel as he did, and acknowledge King George II as their leader. According to McRae, they all did so. One could hardly expect the Cherokees to be fully aware of exactly whom or what they were giving their allegiance to, or to comprehend the European ceremony at all. But this would not be the only European custom that Cuming would introduce them to. Cuming then declared that the heads of all the Cherokee villages should meet in ten day's time at the village of Nikwasi for a grand council. It now remained for Cuming to ensure that the Cherokees came.

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Alexander Cuming

legendary “Crown of Tannassy”—a dyed cap of opossum hair—he immediately desired to have it as a good symbol to give to King George upon his return. He traveled further into the mountains, and when he came to the village of Tassetcha, he won over the council there in a similar manner to Keowee. Most importantly, he gained their support in winning over the Overhill Towns. This area was key if he were to befriend the Tannassy Warrior who held the crown he sought, as well as Moytoy, a Cherokee leader whom he desired to name “Emperor” to represent the entire nation. This he did (most likely by promising great benefits to each of them personally) and they both agreed to be at the Nikwasi meeting.

This meeting occurred on April 3, 1730. It was here that Cuming gave his support to Moytoy as Emperor of all Cherokees, to which the council agreed. Moytoy then expressed his desire to share this glory with Cuming, which prompted the other Cherokees present to lift Cuming up onto the seat reserved for Moytoy and perform the Eagle Tail Dance for him. This involved stroking him with the tail feathers of 13 golden eagles. Cuming understood this to be the dance they perform to invest their rulers.

Armed with this authority, Cuming demanded of the gathered council that they hand over the Crown of Tannassy, along with the eagle tails used in this ceremony and scalps of their enemies as signs of submission, and demanded also that they acknowledge the sovereignty of King George II, “all of which they did on their knees, calling upon every thing that was terrible to them to destroy them, and that they might become his People, if they violated their Promise and Obedience.”

This unprecedented act of diplomacy was Cuming’s crowning achievement. Once he had secured the allegiance of the Cherokee Nation to Britain, he desired to return to his native land (and undoubtedly spread the fame of his own name). He wished to return with Moytoy, who refused, but seven other Cherokee warriors agreed to travel with him across the Atlantic. Whether these men were intended to be representatives of their Nation or mere tokens of Cuming’s travels is not known, but once in England they were treated as the former by the courts.

Cuming took these warriors back to Charles Town with him, passing through Oconee and Keowee on his way. On May 4th they set sail for England, and arrived in London on June 5th. After this date, Cuming secured lodgings for the Cherokees, who saw little of him for the next two weeks. It is at this point, when Cuming is back in Britain, that we have the most evidence of his ventures and begin to be able to see a clearer image of the man.

It was on June 18, 1730, when the Cherokees saw Cuming again, in the court of King George II. The Cherokees were said to have bowed down as subjects of the King. Of course, they may have been previously prompted to do so, or simply saw everyone else do it as English custom. This was the first time any Cherokee had ever been in an English court, and the warriors were treated to the knighting of a duke and two earls as Knights of the Order of the Garter. McRae does mention that the Cherokees were disappointed not to have been offered any food during the ceremony and festivities.



Cherokee representatives went to England with Alexander Cuming in 1730, and are depicted in this sketch amongst native plants.

Four days later they were formally presented before the King. A formal treaty was then drawn up in Cuming’s residence between Britain and the Cherokee Nation. The seven Cherokees were forced to sign it as representatives of their Nation.

This treaty, the first such treaty to exist between England and the Cherokees, stated that the seven warriors present, “You Scayagusta

Oukah, Chief of the Town of Tassetta—You Scate Casken Ketagusta—You Tethtone—You Clogoillah—You Colannah—You Oucounacou,” had all been made deputies by “Moytoy of Telliko, with the Consent and Approbation of the whole Nation of the Cherokee Indians.” These seven men were assumed to have the authority to make agreements for the entire nation of Cherokees, even though such a unified nation did not exist. Nevertheless, the treaty was written as “if the whole Nation of Cherokees, the Old Men, Young Men, Wives and Children were all present.”

The treaty decreed that the enemies of the English were the enemies of the Cherokees and likewise with their friends. It demanded that the Cherokees treat the English as their own

Alexander Cuming

brothers, and must be ready to fight against any one who opposes the English. Most importantly, though, the treaty called for the English to increase their lands so that they may stretch from Charles Town to the Cherokee Nation. “And as the King has given His Land on both sides of the great Mountains to His own Children the English, so He now gives to the Cherokee Indians the Priviledge of living where they please.”

In return, the Cherokee must “keep the trading Path clean, and that there be no Blood in the Path where the English White Men tread; even tho they should be accompanyd by any other People with whom the Cherokees are at War.” The treaty also prevents the Cherokees from trading with anyone other than the English, nor can they allow any other white nation to settle or build forts on their lands. The Cherokee and the English alike who live in the Cherokee Nation would be subject to English, not Cherokee law, should any such man be killed. This “Agreement of Peace and Friendship betwixt the English and the Cherokees” was to be binding “as long as the Mountains and Rivers shall last, or the Sun shine..”

The English basically forced this agreement upon the Cherokees. The seven warriors could not very well have refused while they were but seven in a foreign nation. When they returned home and told of the treaty, they faced the anger of their own nation.

Once Cuming had the Cherokees safely in Britain, he apparently had little to do with them. In a response to the treaty two days later, on September 9th, the Cherokees said, “There was a person in our Country with Us, he gave a Yellow token of his Warlike Honour, that is left with Moytoy of Telliko; And as Warriors, we received it. He came to Us like a Warrior from you, A Man he was, his talk was upright, and the token he left, preserves his Memory amongst Us. We have looked round for the Person that was in Our Country, he is not here, however We must say, that he talked upright to Us, and We shall never forget him.”

The Cherokees spent the remainder of the summer as spectacles in London, and continued to see little of Cuming. He was apparently having strenuous financial difficulties stemming from notes he had issued in the colonies, and was constantly seeking support from the Duke of Newcastle, and King George himself. While claiming no responsibility for the Cherokee men (thereby trying to avoid any bills they

accrued), he found every opportunity to suggest that he be named Overlord of the Cherokee Nation—a position that was denied him., His story unfolds in the correspondence that survives.

On July 15, 1739, Cuming received a note from James Crowe, who had been providing lodgings for the Cherokee men. Crowe makes mention of a perhaps violent incident and refuses to allow the Cherokees to stay one more night in his residence. He then demands that Cuming pay their bill in full with haste. On this same day Cuming writes a letter to one Mr. Delafay, representing His Majesty. In this letter Cuming mentions that the King had set aside someone to take care of the Cherokees, and also a sum of money for that purpose. He suggests that Mr. Crowe’s bill be paid out of that sum, but “I am not willing that any of the money should pass through my hands, because what I

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have done was not for my own Advantage but for the Service of my King & Country.” Alexander Cuming is tactfully denying responsibility for the visitors (and their debts). Then he goes on in the letter to suggest that if he were granted more authority over the Cherokees, he could easily solve these problems, but unless this is done, “I’m afrayed I shall not be able to attend them.” In effect, he is asking for this authority over the Cherokees (as well as access to funds to support them).

Cuming repeats these exact same sentiments in a letter to the Duke of Newcastle. He once more denies responsibility of the Cherokees, asks that Mr. Crowe’s bill be paid out of provisional funds rumored to have been set aside for the Cherokees, and tactfully suggest that he would be happy to take responsibility for such matters if given the authority. In his mind he relinquished all responsibility of the Cherokee visitors the moment he presented them to King George, and “cannot now take upon him to give any Directions or Assume to himself the Charge of those Peoples unless he receives first His Majestys authority for doing So.”

It would appear that Cuming is merely attempting to make a case for himself being named Overlord of the Cherokees. It is only natural for him to assume that this title would be granted to him, as he was the one who arranged for their allegiance (and submission) to the English. In fact, it can be argued that the obtaining of such a position could be the

Alexander Cuming

very reason why Cuming made the dangerous voyage. In a letter written directly to King George II, Alexander Cuming reminds the King that it was he who won the Cherokees' allegiance, and then asks outright "to enjoy by Your Majestys Gracious Favour, the Same Power over the Cherokee Nation which He has obtained by their own consent, and this will enable Your Memorialist to answer for their Behaviour with respect to Your Majestys Service."

Apparently this request was not answered favorably, for in a later letter addressed to His Majesty, Cuming says that he "is willing to run all risks in living among them for three Years, and thereby promote Your Majestys Service, after such a manner, as to render it easie for any one to continue it afterwards." This suggests a certain desperateness about Cuming. He is willing to leave behind his family, friends, and estates to live in the Carolina wilderness

for years in order to gain this title. Of course, one could argue that Cuming would also be leaving his debts behind in England. And Cuming obviously received more admiration and respect from the Cherokees than from his own countrymen. After all, in the Carolinas he would have an Emperor answering to him!

In a letter to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Cuming says that the symbols of the Cherokee Nation were given over to him, and not to anyone else, and that the Cherokees came to England not to enter into any agreements, but only did so at his own command. He then states that the Cherokees have already chosen him to be their Director, "and if His Majesty approves He shall Direct them for their own Good and for His Majesty's Service."

This request was ultimately denied. At some point during that summer it must have become apparent to Cuming that he would never be named Overlord of the Cherokees, for the requests ceased. Even a final request for one of the Cherokee warriors to remain in England with him (which Cuming claimed was the desire of the Cherokee) was denied by the Board.

The Cherokees returned home to a nation that would be forever changed by the events of that year. And Alexander Cuming saw no profit or recognition for his actions. In 1736 he was thrown into debtor's prison. He sent numerous letters to the Duke of Argyll asking to be reinstated for the 300 pounds per annum wages. He reminded King George of a decades old promise. Cuming's father had allegedly saved King George from drowning, after which the King promised to make him the highest man in all England. Cuming argued that since he had not kept that promise to his

father, the King should at least take care that Alexander was provided for. The King did not recall that promise being made.

Later, in a letter dated August 6, 1737, Alexander Cuming wrote to King George:

I made the Cherokee Indian, the most considerable Nation of the American Savages, pay their Homage to Your Majesty by my laying the Crown of their Nation at Your Majestys feet on virtue of a Power which I

obtained by means of Providence without either fraud or force. I neither had nor desired any reward for this proof of my Loyalty and Zeal.

After writing these words, he once more requests that the King make good on the promise made to his father and support him financially.

The end result for Cuming was a brief tour of duty as a Captain once more in Jamaica, under Governor Trelawney (Cuming had sought that Governorship for himself as well, but had it denied him). He died in 1775, and is remembered by a small sign posted by Nikwasi Mound in Franklin, North Carolina.

For the Cherokee Nation, Cuming's visit meant a greater interest in them on the part of the English—this manifested itself as increased trade and increased settlements in their land. It also brought a period of relative peace between the Cherokees and the British settlers, at a time when the Cherokees were about to join with the French in a war against them. Whatever the motives behind Cuming's visit, he was a pioneer in many respects, and the influence of his connecting these two cultures cannot be denied in Cherokee, and American, history.



Alexander Cuming died in 1775, and is remembered by a small sign posted by Nikwasi Mound in Franklin, North Carolina.

Nature's Composers

Eric Orr

To most of us, bird songs are a welcome harbinger of spring. It's hard not to appreciate their lively melodies after months of cold dead winter. The complexity and diversity of birdsong have inspired countless musicians throughout history. The musical patterns of birds not only have influenced songwriters, but birds have actually written some of the tunes that show up in our music.

In 1787, Mozart published his divertimento for sextet K. 522, which was nicknamed *A Musical Joke* for its untraditionally awkward structure. Various instruments are played in different keys simultaneously, and the work seems to wander aimlessly before ending abruptly. Some critics of Mozart's day believed that the piece was a parody aimed at unskilled composers. The late Luis Baptista, former chairman and curator of ornithology for the California Academy of Sciences, thought Mozart drew inspiration for the piece primarily from his pet starling. When his cherished bird passed, Mozart held a ceremonious funeral which included hymns and poetry. Eight days later he composed the divertimento.

The song bird owes his song to a unique two-part organ called the syrinx. Each half of the syrinx is independently controlled, so a bird can harmonize with himself or even sing two songs at the same time. Starlings are masters at mimicking other birds and have been known to imitate two species simultaneously. Baptista thought Mozart was imitating his starling by mixing up keys in his composition.

Almost everyone is familiar with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but only a birder would recognize it as the song of the white-breasted wood wren. His Sixth Symphony incorporates the music of a quail, a yellowhammer, and a cuckoo, which may be the most common birdsong in Western music. Vivaldi makes use of the flute to render a goldfinch's tune in "Il gardellino."

Czech composer Antonin Dvorak kept wood thrushes in his house and often included birdsong in his work. He was

fascinated by the brilliance and intensity of avian music. In the opening theme of *American Quartet*, a violin chirps a melody that was written by a scarlet tanager.

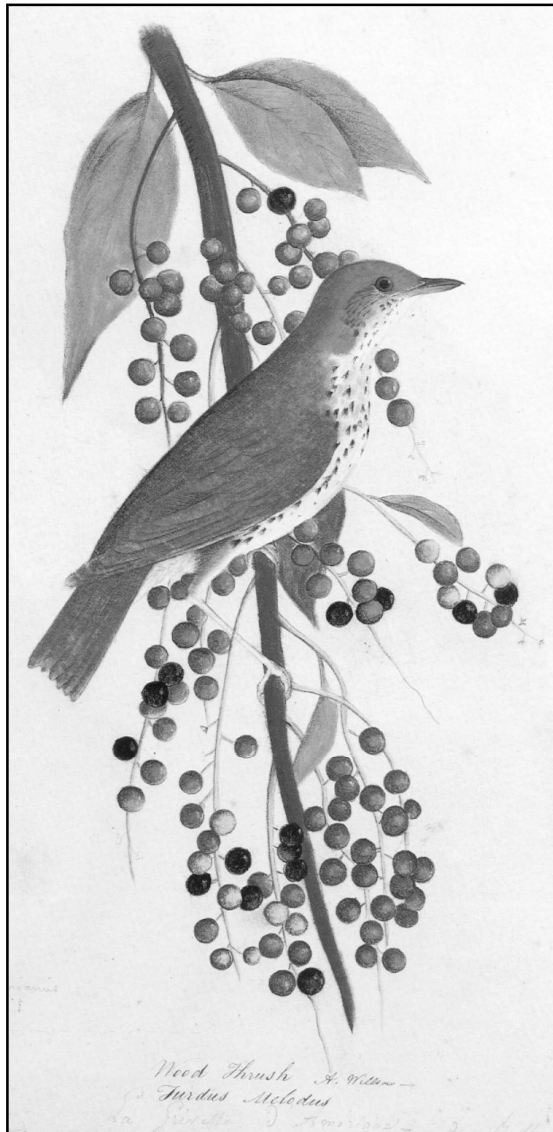
Another classical composer, Oliver Messiaen, took a deep interest birdsong as a child. As an adult Messiaen sought the help of ornithologists to learn everything he could about avian music. He would often walk through the woods making elaborate notes or recordings of every bird song he heard. He even traveled from his home in France to other countries like Japan and the United States in search of birdsong. Messiaen would later transpose the melodies into orchestral form. Everything he wrote from 1955 until his death in 1992 contained pieces of birdsong.

The use of birdsong is not limited to classical music. Central American Indians based many of their folk songs on the melodies of the cenzontle, a very vocal bird native to their region.

Why are we so drawn to birdsong as to create our own art from it? Baptista suggested that it may be the similarities we find in our own musical technique and tradition. The wood thrush, for instance, sings in a diatonic scale, a scale composed of eight notes, or an octave. It's the same foundation that most western music is built on. The hermit thrush's music is based on the pentatonic scale, the same scale used in East Asian and Native American music.

But transposing birdsong into man's music is like taking a snapshot of a river. Birdsong is more related to traditional mythology or storytelling than it is to western music.

Just as folklore constantly evolves, so do the musical patterns of birds. Their songs are modified and manipulated by the same influences that change the stories we tell each other. Birds pass down songs from parent to child. Unrelated adults teach the young to sing. And young birds learn from their peers. As the song is passed from bird to bird, it undergoes continual modification. For this reason their vocal patterns are



The wood thrush sings in a diatonic scale, a scale of eight notes, or an octave.

Nature's Composers

regionally specific. A Georgia robin, for example, has a different “dialect” than that of a Montana robin. Like an American child who grows up in France, a bird may even take on the language of other species. Some birds sing each other’s songs when competing for territory. The Lawrence’s thrush from South America imitates up to 173 other birds, as well as frogs and insects. In one instance a juvenile bullfinch was raised with a canary and learned the canary’s song. Once the bullfinch bred, his son learned the same song.

Birdsong patterns also fluctuate according to context. When blackbirds sing to each other they leave noticeable gaps in their song—space for other blackbirds to fill by finishing phrases or adding new notes. The song varies as circumstances change. Sometimes they throw in borrowed bits of other birds’ songs. It’s an informal jam session where one musician takes the lead and another builds on it. Just like people, birds seem to savor variation and novelty interspersed with repetition. Baptista made the point that humans and birds share the propensity to “tune monotony out.” Birdsong is based on themes. The song may be basically the same each time it is sung, but the musician usually alters it a little.

Not all birdsongs evolve so quickly, though. Beethoven’s Violin Concerto in D, Opus 61 incorporates a birdsong that was first identified as that of a blackbird in 1953. It was again identified 30 years later, indicating that through hundreds of years of musical evolution, that particular song has remained fairly static.

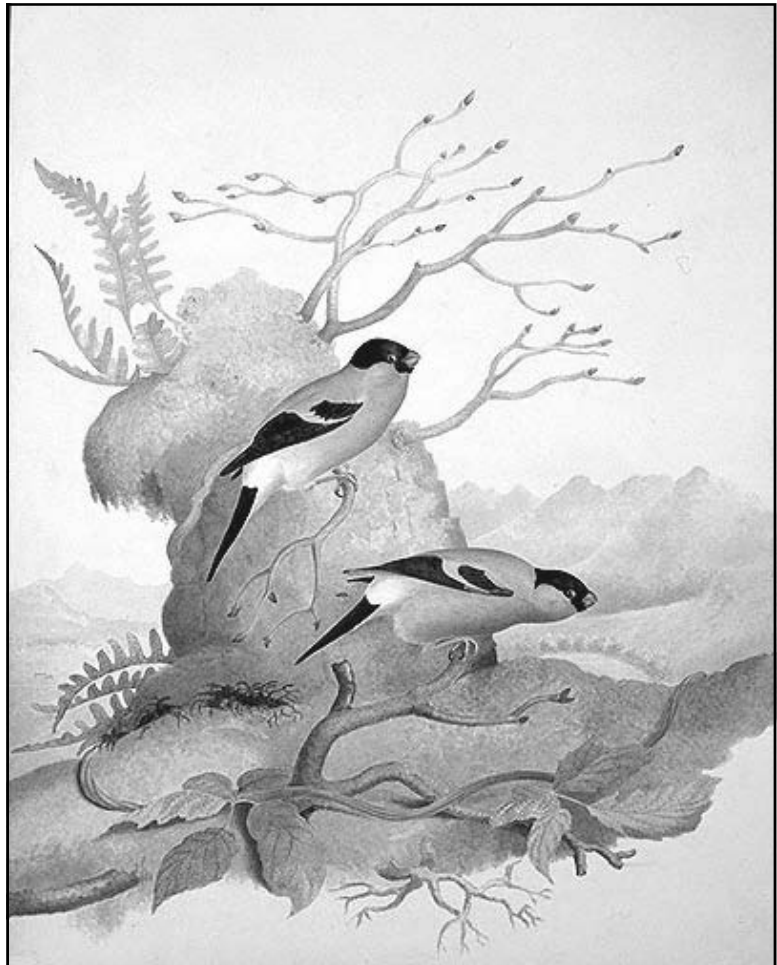
It seems natural that we would identify with the music of birds and that we would borrow from it and incorporate it in our own composition. And given the tendency of birds to mimic other birds, it seems natural that they might be influenced by our sounds. The townspeople of the German village Baden-Württemberg used to teach bullfinches to sing folk songs, and starlings have been known to imitate the sound of train whistles.

Not all birds sing, though. Some birds communicate through the use of short monotonic calls, which ornithologists say are inherited. Most ornithologists also agree that birdsong is meant for communication. Their songs usually serve to stake claims on territory, attract mates, or warn other birds of danger. Studies have indicated that female starlings are more attracted to males who sing longer and more intricate songs. Singing is such an important mating ritual that the sound of traffic has seriously threatened the breeding habits of some birds.

Although it’s obvious that birds use music like we use language, not everyone agrees they sing just for the sake of song. Eugene Morton, ornithologist at the Smithsonian Institution, doesn’t think so. He believes that we anthropomorphize birds by assuming they

enjoy singing. To compare birdsong with our music, he says, is to see the world the way “humans want to perceive it.” He goes on to say that what separates bird music from human music is the fact that their song is simply a form of long distance communication. According to Morton’s theory, it saves them from having to fly across town for a conversation, a sort of avian telephone. “Human music isn’t particularly distance related.”

I’m not sure how Morton could get into a bird’s brain to make the determination, and I’m really not sure what distance relation has to do with the nature of music, human or bird. It seems to me that to undeniably rule out the possibility that birds might take pleasure in singing is just as presumptuous as anthropomorphizing them. I suppose I’ll never know for sure, but I’d like to think something as beautifully intricate as birdsong pleases the artist as much as the listener.



The townspeople of the German village Baden-Württemberg taught bullfinches to sing folk songs.

Watershed Update

LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND ON THE ROCKS

With funding for public land acquisition projects in the Chattooga River watershed at an all time low, President Bush's recent budget recommendations for FY 2006 continue that downward spiral by proposing to *terminate* funding to states from the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and *cut the federal LWCF to the lowest level* in the last ten years. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a very popular bipartisan program established in 1964 to create parks, playgrounds, open spaces, hiking and bicycle paths, preserve wildlife habitat, and enhance recreational opportunities. The Fund uses proceeds from offshore oil and gas drilling leases, and since its inception has spent this money to create and/or augment many of our most treasured national parks, forests and refuges, as well as thousands of community parks and urban recreation areas. Just a few of these places are the Everglades National Park, Appalachian Trail, and the Chattooga National Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

Currently in the Chattooga watershed, there are several key tracts that willing sellers have offered for acquisition into public land holdings. These tracts include wildlife corridors, sensitive species' habitat, streams that flow into the Chattooga River, and undisturbed areas adjacent to the national forest. Given the escalating, voracious pace of development here prompt action to acquire the land is the best hope for conserving these natural resources, for which the Chattooga watershed is famous. The opportunity for protecting key tracts is growing slimmer by the day! Please take a moment at this pivotal time to communicate your unequivocal, strong support for full funding of the Land & Water Conservation Fund, which is authorized at \$900 million annually to safeguard important natural areas and provide urban recreation opportunities. **Call** and ask for your Members of Congress at 202-224-3121 (Capitol switchboard), **and request their support for full funding of the LWCF.** Ask also that your senators and representatives write congressional leadership and appropriations committee members in support of a high allocation for the Land & Water Conservation Fund.

PREDATOR BEETLE PROGRAM DIVERSIFIES

Work suppressing the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) is moving forward full tilt in the Chattooga watershed, with this season's releases of the predator beetle *Sasajiscymnus tsugae* projected to double last year's numbers. The Chattooga Conservancy is working with Clemson University entomologists and other HWA biological control project partners placing 5,000 to 15,000 *S. tsugae*

predator beetles in suitable areas every week. The beetle release schedule started in January and is expected to continue into early July, reaching a total of approximately 200,000 predator beetles set out in the watershed and nearby areas. In addition, the Clemson University insectary has started research and production of another potential HWA biological control agent named *Laricobus nigrinus*, a small beetle native to the Pacific Northwest that may prove useful in regulating HWA abundance in our area. Like the *S. tsugae* beetle, *L. nigrinus* feeds readily on HWA, and offers the additional advantage that its life cycle is more closely in sync with HWA than that of *S. tsugae*. The first releases of the *L. nigrinus* beetle in the Chattooga watershed are planned to occur in December 2005. Researchers at Clemson are cultivating *L. nigrinus*

for release in the watershed because there is consensus in the scientific community that successful efforts to control HWA must include the production of an array of beneficial insects.

EYE ON LEGISLATURE

As many would expect in the wake of the 2004 elections, the emboldened congressional majority is continuing work to pass legislation that would weaken many of our bedrock environmental and quality of life protections. For instance, the current House energy bill (H. R. 6) weakens public health protections concerning our air and water quality, opens pristine wilderness areas to oil and gas drilling including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, creates huge subsidies to log our national forests, and does nothing to save oil and promote clean, renewable energy sources. Then there's H. R. 1299, deceptively called the "Critical Habitat Enhancement Bill," which actually weakens protections for endangered species and their habitat. Also, be aware that the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation recently proposed a drastic cut on tax benefits for donations of land and conservation easements. In sum, the committee, which is a body looked to by congress for expert advice on tax matters, proposed that tax deductions for a conservation easement be limited to no more than 33% of the easement's appraised value, and that no deduction be allowed for an easement on a property used by the taxpayer as their personal residence. As these and other pieces of legislation geared to undercutting environmental and quality of life protections make their way through congress, speak out! The majority of Americans support clean air and water, preserving our national forests for wildlife habitat and all kinds of recreation, and tax incentives for conservation—not for wasting our environment. Please make your opinion known to your representatives in congress, and that their votes will affect your votes come re-election time.

CONSERVATION BUYERS NEEDED!

The Chattooga Conservancy has been advised of several large tracts of land in the watershed that may be available for buyers interested in limited development with conservation easements to protect green space, riparian corridors and wetlands. Please contact us for details.

Conservation Fair *Saturday, June 4th*

**Join us Saturday, June 4th from 9:30 to 2:30
for the Chattooga Conservancy's
4th annual Conservation Fair**

**KIDS' PUPPET SHOW , MUSIC, FOOD,
NATIVE PLANT SALE, CRAFTS SALE & FUN!!**

Schedule of Events:

9:30 – 2:30 Native Plant Sale - Plants from *Chattooga Gardens*, the premier garden center in Cashiers, NC. Fill your yard with beautiful native shrubs & flowers!

Arts & Crafts Sale

Handmade, one of a kind treasures.

11:00-11:30 Puppet Show “Cherokee Tales” - the magic of Cherokee Indian Tales comes to life with puppets, storytelling & lots of participation - KIDS NEEDED! presented by the *Piccadilly Puppet Co.* of Atlanta

11:00-2:00 **Lynbones Rolling BBQ** - Yummy BBQ beef, chicken, pork & ribs with all the sides, drinks & desserts

11:30-1:00 **Music** - Come tap your toes and dance on the lawn!



Hank Belew & friends picking in 2004



Caterpillar puppets, Katy & Kevin

1:00-1:30 Puppet Show “Butterfly Ballad” - Follow Katy and Kevin Caterpillar through the stages of their lives, from egg, to caterpillar, to chrysalis, to butterfly. Presented by the *Piccadilly Puppet Co.* of Atlanta.

Members' Page

Many thanks to all who recently renewed their membership, joined or donated goods or time to the Chattooga Conservancy. Your generous contributions will help us continue to work on all of the important conservation issues facing the watershed.

Ethel Allen

Barbara Davis

American Canoe Association — Dixie Division

Donald DeBona

Barbara & William Anderson, Jr.

Hans & Ann Dukes

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Renewal

Spring 2005

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Join and help protect the Chattooga River watershed

Your contribution is greatly appreciated!
Donations will be used to support the Conservancy's work, and guarantee you delivery of the *Chattooga Quarterly*. We're a non-profit organization, and all contributions are tax-deductible.

THANK YOU!

*Send to:
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Chattooga Conservancy

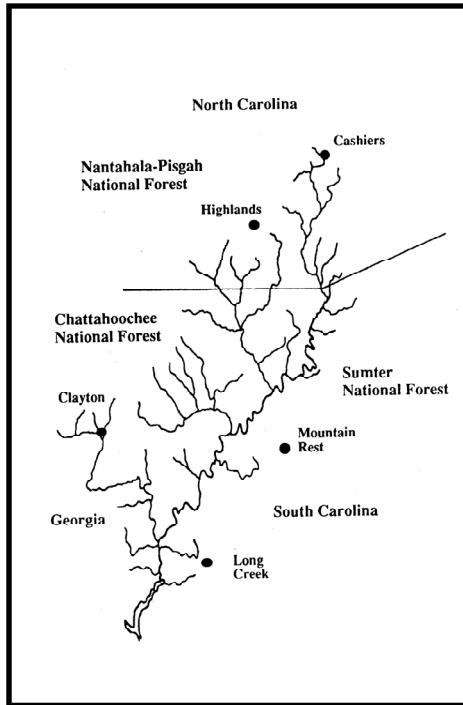
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(706) 782-6097 tel. (706)782-6098 fax info@chattoogariver.org www.chattoogariver.org

Purpose: To protect, promote and restore the natural ecological integrity of the Chattooga River watershed ecosystem; to ensure the viability of native species in harmony with the need for a healthy human environment; and, to educate and empower communities to practice good stewardship on public and private lands.

Made Possible By:

Members and Volunteers
National Forest Foundation
Patagonia, Inc.
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The Sapelo Foundation
Environmental Systems Research Institute
Norcross Wildlife Foundation
Balloun Family Foundation



Goals:

- Monitor the U.S. Forest Service's management of public forest lands in the watershed
- Educate the public
- Promote public choice based on credible scientific information
- Promote public land acquisition by the Forest Service within the watershed
- Protect remaining old growth and roadless areas
- Work cooperatively with the Forest Service to develop a sound ecosystem initiative for the watershed

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