

SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES OF CONCERN IN GEORGIA

Information for Family Forest Owners

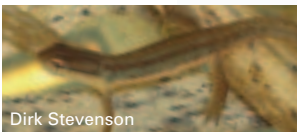
One of the environmental issues of concern today is the worldwide decline in forest habitat and the related loss of biodiversity. As a good land steward, it's important to be aware of plant and animal species and ecological communities of concern that are designated as "imperiled, critically imperiled, threatened, or endangered" and how forest management activities on your lands may affect these species. Critically imperiled (G1) or imperiled (G2) species or ecological communities are globally rare or, because of some factor(s), especially vulnerable to extinction. They are designated as imperiled or critically imperiled by non-government organizations such as NatureServe (and its constituent Natural Heritage programs) or the IUCN (The World Conservation Organization). Threatened and endangered species are listed by government agencies under the U.S. Endangered Species Act or the Canadian Species at Risk Act and may also be listed under state or provincial laws; yet they may or may not be listed as critically imperiled or imperiled, globally.

The **Georgia Natural Heritage Program** can provide information on species and communities of concern in your area. Log on to www.georgiawildlife.com and click on "Nongame Animals and Plants" or call the office at (770) 918-6411. **NatureServe**, www.natureserve.org, has additional information on species and communities of concern. These organizations coordinate the management of inventories of biological diversity in the U.S. and Canada.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) program (www.aboutsfi.org) combines the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with the long-term protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water quality. To meet the SFI Standard, program participants who procure wood from family forest owners provide outreach opportunities to family forest owners on conservation of biodiversity for imperiled species.

In Georgia, the SFI program has partnered with Forests for Watersheds & Wildlife™ to provide you with a series of profiles on species of concern native to Georgia's forests. The species and communities featured in this profile are examples of many that depend on family forest owners for protection. To view other profiles, visit www.forestedflyways.org.

Striped newt – *Notophthalmus perstriatus*



Dirk Stevenson

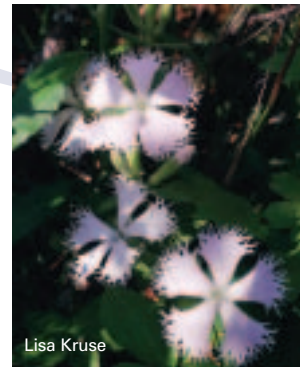
During dry periods, adults and efts may burrow under leaf litter or moist logs.

In Georgia, this globally imperiled (G2) species is known from isolated occurrences in the lower Coastal Plain—north to Screven and Jenkins counties, southeast to Wilcox County and west to Baker County and in the Fall Line Sandhills in Taylor County. This small (2-3 inches) newt has a unique life cycle. Adults breed in temporary ponds in longleaf pine sandhills and flatwoods during late winter to

early spring. As the ponds dry, the larvae develop lungs and transform into a terrestrial, sexually-immature juvenile (called an eft) with granular skin, solid red stripes on their sides and no tail fins. After an unknown period, efts return to the ponds and undergo a second transformation into a sexually-mature, aquatic adult. Adults have red stripes; however, they are smooth-skinned and have obvious tail fins. They live in the water but come to the surface to breathe. Threats to the newt include habitat conversion, drainage of ponds, and fire suppression. Without periodic fires, hardwoods can spread, degrading the breeding ponds and the native longleaf pine-wiregrass habitat.

Fringed campion – *Silene polypetala*

This globally imperiled (G2) and federally endangered species has been recorded in seven counties in central (Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Talbot, Taylor, Twigs and Upson) and southwestern (Decatur) Georgia and near Lake Seminole in Florida. This perennial flowers from March to mid-May and grows in moist soils in mature, mixed hardwood forests on slopes, river bluffs, and stream terraces. Thin, shallow-rooting, horizontal stems allow the plant to spread in a mat-like fashion. Flowering shoots, up to 16 inches tall, emerge from a rosette of spatula-shaped leaves, and bear 3-5 flowers. Threats to this plant include conversion of hardwood forests for agriculture, pine plantations or development and the spread of invasives, particularly Japanese honeysuckle.



Lisa Kruse

The five-petaled, pinkish-white, fringed flower is distinctive.

Swamp Blackgum/Buttonbush-Shining Fetterbush Sagpond Forest – *Nyssa biflora/Cephalanthus occidentalis-Lyonia lucida*



John B. Jensen

These forests are important to groundwater recharge and are impacted by changes in groundwater levels.

This globally, critically imperiled (G1-G2) community occurs in isolated, seasonally-flooded upland depression ponds in the Ridge and Valley region of northern Georgia and Alabama. Vegetation grows in a zone-like fashion, with the outer “ring” comprised primarily of hardwood trees, of which Swamp blackgum is the most common and indicative of this forest type. In the interior, shrubs are dominant, with shining fetterbush occupying higher elevations and buttonbush lower areas. Ferns, sedges, vines, and other non-woody plants also grow in the interior and may sometimes form a

distinct zone. Standing water is often present and water-loving plants, such as spotted pondweed and humped bladderwort, grow. The sagponds are formed along geological faults that have impounded drainage or in areas with limestone bedrock. This rock can be dissolved by slightly-acidic groundwater or rainfall. When this occurs, soil will slump, creating depressions that fill with water.

Technical and Cost-share Assistance:

The Partners for Fish & Wildlife program of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service offers technical and financial assistance to landowners for restoration of native habitat types. Contact: (912) 265-9336 x25 or go to www.fws.gov/southeast/partners.

The Landowner’s Guide to Conservation Incentives by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources is an excellent publication about available state and federal cost-share assistance. For more information, go to www.georgiawildlife.com or call (478) 994-1438.

If you want to develop a conservation strategy for these or other rare species or ecological communities or find out if they may occur on your land, contact the Georgia Natural Heritage Program at (770) 918-6411 or (706) 557-3032.



Produced by Forests for Watersheds & Wildlife™ (FW²), a program of the American Forest Foundation. FW² works with partners and family forest owners to conserve and create critical habitat for imperiled wildlife species.

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