

Black bear problems continue in Towns County...continued from page 1

sometimes eight to 10 bears in a single location. Frank Riley, who planted a two-acre plot of sweet corn to benefit the Towns County Food Pantry said the cash crop was literally destroyed "by more than one bear," Riley told the crowd Monday night.

"We planted six acres of sweet corn on the river and it yielded 1,000 dozen ears of corn," Riley said. "We harvested 80 dozen ears and by the time we got back to harvest the rest, the bears had destroyed it."

Rich Gagnon of Papa's Pizza on Highway 76 told DNR about the incredibly large bear that continues to damage his dumpster and feast on leftover pizza.

"We've got a pizza loving bear at Papa's Pizza," Gagnon said. "I've tied the lid down, but he just sits on top of the dumpster, the rubber lid sinks down and he puts his paw in there to pull the pizza out."

Derrick Moody has lived here all of his life and he's never seen a bear problem in Towns County, until now.

"I've seen nine different bears this year at my home," he said. "My kids love to play soccer, but they won't go outside now."

Moody worries for the safety of his children. He wants to have assurances that he can protect them in case a bear becomes aggressive.

"We have seen two sows with cubs and they're very aggressive," Moody said. "I've lived here all of my life and I've never had a problem with bears before until now."

Wildlife Biologist Adam Hammond understands Moody's plight.

He concedes that the bear population in North Georgia is getting way out of hand.

Hammond also acknowledged that North Georgia bears are having more cubs than normal.

"There's definitely a spike in the bear population in 2009," he said. "This has definitely been the craziest summer for bears that I can remember. The bear situation is serious. We've had more than double the usual number of calls about black bears."

This year alone, Region 2, which includes Towns County, has 750 calls to DNR about problem bears.

Game Warden Brandon Walls, who oversees War Woman Management

Area, said the problem is not going to be solved overnight.

"There's not a magic wand that we can wave in the air and solve all the problems," he said. "We're going to have to work together to resolve this issue."

The goal of the Southern Appalachian Natural Resource agencies is to provide an environment where bears can live with minimal interference from humans. Bears become habituated to human food if they find it often enough. In this instance, they lose their wildness and become threats to people, property and themselves.

Part of that resolve is bear-proof garbage containers, don't put bird seed out, don't put dog or cat food out. The treats for other wildlife turn into a feast for black bears.

Also, the more contact bears have with humans tends to lessen their fear of bear-human encounters, Hammond said.

DNR acknowledges that there aren't a whole lot of bear hunters in the woods during hunting season. That's because there is a whole lot of work that goes into harvesting a black bear.

"Changes need to be made in our laws," Riddleberger said. "We know there is a bear problem. We need increased bag limits, longer harvest seasons and we also need to address how to handle situations involving property damage."

County Attorney Fletcher Griffin also believes that Georgia needs a self-defense statute related to black bears.

"In Georgia, the law doesn't protect you when you're defending yourself against a black bear," Griffin said. "If everything isn't done properly, you're subject to 12 months in jail, a \$5,000 fine and a \$1,500 restitution fine."

"Do not take the law into your own hands," he said. "You're subject to prosecution if it's not bear season. Kentucky has a self-defense law. In Georgia, bears have more rights than humans when it comes to self-defense."

Commissioner Kendall said that he's not sure what the solution is to the problem. He'll continue to be leery of letting his grandchildren play outside near his home.

"I understand how everyone feels about this problem," he said. "That's why we're all here tonight."



Towns County resident Derrick Moody explains that his neighborhood is over run with black bears, having seen as many as nine different bears. Local residents met with Department of Natural Resources officials Monday night at the Towns County Courthouse. Black bear expert Adam Hammond acknowledges that North Georgia has a significant black bear problem. Until lawmakers have a chance to address the crisis, Hammond suggests making food opportunities for black bears scarce. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

Angel's Chamber message Puttin' on the Dog...continued from page 1

Dear Members,

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce will be selling apples fresh off the trees of Mercier's Orchard from Sept. 26 through Sept. 29. We'll be on the square in Hiwassee all day on Saturday and then again on Sunday afternoon. We'll be selling 5-pound bags of Golden Delicious and Jonagold apples at only \$5 per bag. We hope to see you on the Square enjoying the Summer's Last Kiss Art Festival as well.

Believe it or not, October is fast approaching. I didn't know this until recently, but October is Disability Awareness Month. A great way to increase awareness would be to attend the October Union/Towns Employer Committee Meeting Oct. 6th at the recently renovated Young Harris College Dining Facility from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nancy Duncan with the Disability Resource Group will be speaking. She is a great lady and a fabulous speaker. For only \$12, you can have a great lunch, network with other business professionals and hear an informative and interesting speaker. You can contact us at the Chamber to RSVP if you would like to attend.

Tickets for our annual Christmas Tour of Homes will be going on sale Oct. 2nd. We will have tickets available for \$25 each at the Towns County Chamber of Com-

merce, Mountain Realty of Hiwassee and Deb Collins Signature Gallery. We also thought it would be fun for the local shops and restaurants to participate as well. Anyone who is a chamber member can offer a discount at their establishment for the weekend of Dec. 4-6 for Tour of Homes ticket holders. If you would like to offer a discount at your establishment that weekend for ticket holders, please let us know. We hope this program will be a good opportunity for our members to get some additional exposure and traffic during the holiday shopping season.

CHAMBER WELCOMES NEWEST MEMBERS

ADDRIANNA'S WINE COTTAGE, 1604 Hwy 17, Young Harris—Stop in for a great selection of wines, cheeses, chocolate, coffee, etc. We can make your Gift Baskets special! Call (706) 896-9238.

CHINA GRILL, 217 S. Main St, Hiwassee—Authentic Chinese Food prepared fresh and healthy. Eat in or take out. Catering is available, call (706) 896-8088.

HIWASSEE INN, 193 E. Main St., Hiwassee—Under new Management, Family friendly motel with clean accommodations. A great place for those extra out of town

guests. Call (706) 896-4121.

SHONEY'S OF HIWASSEE, 625 Hwy 76, Hiwassee—Under new management, newly renovated and ready to serve you. Family friendly dining with one of the best views in Hiwassee. Call (706) 896-3200.

WEST PRINTING, 259 Cleveland Street, Blairsville—Full line commercial printer, color brochures, business cards, wedding invitations, etc. Call (706) 745-6343.

DCL PLUMBING & TRUCKING, 648 Matheson Cove Road, Hayesville—Licensed and insured in North Carolina and Georgia, commercial and residential plumbing and trucking. Call (706) 781-7839.

Angel Long is the president of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce.

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce and the Towns County Tourism Association are dedicated to providing information that is both informative and up-to-date to our visitors, potential and current Chamber members, and individuals who are interested in moving to the Hiwassee and Young Harris areas.

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce is at 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris, GA. Call (706) 896-4966. Visit us on the Web at www.mountaintopga.com for more insight about what's happening in Hiwassee, Young Harris and Towns County.



Christmas, left, and cage mate Lucky anxiously await a new home. The kittens are siblings being housed at the Mountain Shelter, which serves Union and Towns counties.

Photo/Lowell Nicholson

60 cats on this list, including entire litters of kittens. In fact, most of the animals in "foster homes," people who keep the animals at their residence until they are adopted, are cats. Sometimes, the shelter sends animals to other "no kill" shelters around higher populations with better chances for adoption, but this is no immediate solution to the current cat overcrowding crisis.

That's where the Ninth Annual "Puttin' On the Dog" event comes in to help underwrite the costs associated with the shelter and promote pet adoptions.

Sponsored by United Community Bank this year, the event hosted by Eric and DeAnne Livingston Seifarth at Crane Creek Vineyard promises

to offer lots of food, catered by Moschetto's Continental Café in Young Harris, and fun, with wine tasting, live music by The Vintage Notes, and a silent and live auction.

A 42-inch LG Digital Flat Screen Plasma TV has been donated by Blairsville-based Hoyt's Furniture and Appliance Store for the newly instituted "Raffle for Rover." Tickets for the raffle are \$1 each and \$5 for six tickets.

The winner does not need to be present to win and tickets for the raffle can be purchased at Mountain Animal Shelter or the Blairsville Thrift Store.

Sponsorships of \$100 are available for persons wishing to donate to the cause. This includes one ticket, six raffle

tickets, and two dog bones—which are traded for wine.

Be sure to get your tickets before attending. No tickets will be sold at the door.

Ticket prices are \$30 and can be purchased at Crane Creek Vineyards, Blairsville Thrift Store, Hiwassee Thrift Store, the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, and United Community Bank in Blairsville.

For more details about the event, call (706) 896-1421. And this year, don't just come out only for the dogs, the cats need a loving home too.

Jessica Keaton is a junior at Young Harris College. She writes features for the Towns County Herald. She is the Editor of Enotah Echoes at YHC.



Towns County Chamber of Commerce President Angel Long on the back deck at the Chamber's headquarters off Jack Dayton Circle in Young Harris. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

River rises and rain continues...from page 1

pared for the worst."

Mathis discussed the potential crisis with Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall, Towns County 911 Communications, Chief Deputy Jeff Edge, Assistant Fire Chief Harold Copeland, Hiwassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright and Sally Varao, of American Red Cross Towns County.

"The Pasture is our biggest liability," said Copeland, referring to the RV Park off Georgia 17/75. "There are several cars parked near the cabins. We need to keep a check on families in that area."

"Let's hope the wind doesn't get up," he said. "That's our biggest worry, downed trees because of the saturated ground."

Varao said that the Red Cross is ready in the event an emergency shelter is needed.

"We can open the Family Life Center as an emergency shelter," she said. "If there are less than 10 families affected, we can send them to the Holiday Inn."

Commissioner Kendall advised Mathis that the county had a couple of vans at the Senior Center

that could be used to help evacuate any families in the event of serious flooding.

According to the National Weather Service, the threat of flooding remains a possibility. The creeks and rivers are already high and the forecast calls for rain through Sunday. The chances of more precipitation range between 40 percent and 60 percent, according to the weather service.

Mathis kept his fingers crossed on Monday evening.

"It may be a long night, but it may be a good night," he said.



Emergency Services Director Ricky Mathis discusses weather crisis with emergency personnel. Photo/Lowell Nicholson