

# Outings and Events Stories

## Member Memories of Past Hikes and Events

Memories are made in the National Forests: we learn, we experience beauty, we find joy with friends. This is the experience of one such event.

### Take Me to the River: Chattooga Poetry Hikelog

by Patricia Kyritsi Howell



The recent GFW sponsored hike to the Chattooga River in Rabun County can only be described as “a perfect hike.” The weather was deliciously cool with a slight breeze, the sun was warm enough to bask in, and the trees were decked out in full color. It was almost impossible to walk along the trail without stopping to marvel at the blazing red, vibrant yellow and mellow orange leaves that fluttered around us. Fifteen hikers set off along the Chattooga River Trail as it meanders up and down along several ridges, leading eventually to the shores of the river.

We especially savored one of the subtle pleasures of this particular trail: as we hiked along there were

stretches where the constant roar of the river, hidden from sight beyond the ridges, echoed through the forest. A little further along, after a bend in the trail, we entered a silent hollow where the only sound was leaves rustling in the breeze and the call of birds high above. We continued along, back and forth between the roar of the river and pristine silence.

We arrived on the shores of the great Chattooga River in early afternoon. Sitting along the river bank we could see places high in the trees above us where leaves and branches had been lodged during the record rainfalls this past month. In some places it looked as if the river had surged more than twenty feet over its banks.

Then Laurence Holden, a poet and artist from Clayton, Georgia, took his place before us. With the mighty, wild river rushing by just a few feet away, Laurence began to talk to us of rivers. Reading from his own poems, and several from other poets, his words drew us down into the very soul of the river. As we sat there, it seemed to me that the energy of that sacred river began to flow around us and through us. All of the elements of the day converged into a shimmering moment when the beauty of that place and the poetic vision that Laurence brought to life washed over us and we were healed. As our group reluctantly began to pack up and start back along the trail towards home, my heart was full of gratitude for that moment, and for all of those who have worked so hard for so long to preserve wild places like this.

Thanks to hike organizers, Brooks Franklin, Maureen Keating and Laurence Holden for putting this day together and to ForestWatch board member Honor Woodard who also helped out. This hike is the first in a series being planned by Brooks and Maureen. The next one will incorporate drumming and making music with found objects. Stay tuned to ForestWatch Alerts for the invitation to what promises to be another very special day.

Are you signed up to receive ForestWatch Alerts? If not, [contact us today](#).

To learn more about Laurence Holden's poetry and artwork, [click here](#).

To learn more about Patricia K. Howell, Applachian herbalist and healer, [click here](#).