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We are facing the biggest, most complex environmental challenges of our lives. Our planet is threatened by the dual crises of rapid climate change and biodiversity loss—and addressing both is crucial. That’s why TNC as a whole, and our partners, are committed to pursuing bold solutions that will benefit biodiversity, sequester carbon and reduce risk to people and places most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

By 2030, our aim is to maximize nature’s ability to fight climate change while bolstering resilience for our most precious ecosystems and vulnerable communities. TNC invites you to join us in realizing these ambitious global goals.

Climate remove or sequester 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year—the same as removing 650 million cars off the road—and help 100 million people who are most likely to be affected by climate-related emergencies such as floods, fires and drought.

Ocean Conserve nearly 10 billion acres of ocean—more than 10 percent of the world’s ocean area

Lands Conserve over 1.5 billion acres of healthy lands, such as forests and grasslands—an area twice the size of India

Freshwater Conserve over 620,000 miles of river watersheds and securing the health of Georgia’s rivers and streams

People Support 45 million people who depend on the ocean, freshwater and lands for their wellbeing and livelihoods

Three quarters of the carbon dioxide emissions driven by humans have occurred since 1950.

There has been nearly a 70% average decline of birds, fish, amphibians, mammals and reptiles since 1970.

We have years, not decades, to address these existential threats.

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Expansion of Broxton Rocks

Generous gifts from our partners and donors in 2021 helped us conserve more of our state’s treasured lands. A $2 million gift resulted in the addition of the 1,114-acre Carter tract to the existing 18,000 acres of protected lands in the Broxton Rocks Conservation Area in southeast Georgia.

Broxton Rocks is one of our state’s most scenic conservation sites and features a waterfall cascading over rock ledges, 30-foot-high cliffs, cave-like crevices and almost desert-like conditions on the flat rocks above the fissures. These unique elements make it both a sought-after place for visitors to experience and a home to a variety of plant and animal species.

The Carter tract includes land with a high diversity of plants and provides habitat for key animal species like the federally threatened eastern indigo snake, the eastern diamondback rattlesnake and the gopher tortoise. The existing tortoises found on the tract complete one additional protected population to the state’s goal of protecting 65 viable populations.

The land is protected and managed by the collective efforts of TNC, local landowners, Coffee County, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Forestry Commission and other partners. Management at Broxton Rocks includes controlled burns that are essential for maintaining natural plant and animal communities. We also plant longleaf pines, wiregrass and other native species to restore natural diversity, and remove non-native, invasive species where needed.

More Conservation Wins for Georgia

Fledgling Progress at Moody Forest

In 2001, TNC entered into a groundbreaking public/private land management partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to create and manage the Moody Forest Preserve in southeast Georgia. This collaborative effort has greatly improved the quality of forest habitat, restored native plant and animal communities and increased the overall diversity of life found on the preserve.

One species making a comeback here is the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.
“They need live pine trees that are old and infected with red heart fungus to make excavating easier,” says Chuck Martin, the director of Moody Forest Preserve. Over time, the mature pine forests where these birds thrive have decreased from 90 million to 5 million acres.

When TNC and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources purchased the first 3,500 acres at Moody Forest, the local population of red-cockaded woodpeckers had dwindled to just a single pair. This year, TNC experts counted a total of 17 chicks from 6 different breeding pairs that had naturally traveled to or were successfully relocated to the preserve. That’s fledgling progress to celebrate!

Protecting the Chattahoochee Fall Line

We received a $7.5 million dollar commitment from the U.S. Army to continue management of our Chattahoochee Fall Line program near Columbus. This funding will help TNC enhance sustainability on 35,000 acres of native wildlife and plant communities that support forestry, farming, outdoor recreation, tourism and the military training mission at Fort Benning.

Fort Benning is home to some of Georgia’s best remaining stands of the rare longleaf pine forest, making it an island of vital habitat for the red-cockaded woodpecker and our state reptile—the gopher tortoise. Thanks to this generous investment from the U.S. Army, we will be able to continue establishing a conservation corridor for these endemic species.

Land Management Update

The Georgia land management team had an exceptional year, planting 683,860 trees and applying prescribed fire to more than 58,000 acres across four states.

Noah Howie

Internship Sparks Opportunity

Through an internship with TNC, Berry College environmental science major Noah Howie assisted TNC Georgia with prescribed burns and has received a graduate teaching assistantship in the Forest Dynamics Lab at the University of Alabama.
In order to address declining populations of native mussels and fish in the Upper Coosa River Basin, we engaged in two important projects within the Conasauga watershed—propagating Alabama rainbow (Villosa nebulosa) mussels for reintroduction into the Holly Creek watershed and conducting a comprehensive barrier assessment of road crossings over streams for adequate fish passage.

There are more than 200 road crossings over streams in the Holly Creek watershed in northwest Georgia, some of which allow fish passage during a variety of flow conditions. However, many are barriers to passage, especially to small-bodied fish. Replacing those barriers with structures designed to optimize fish passage can result in habitat improvement, increased populations of target species and greater resilience of these populations.

This year, TNC Georgia completed a fish passage project in Murray County, Georgia on a tributary of Rock Creek within the larger Conasauga watershed. We also worked with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to successfully propagate several thousand juvenile Alabama rainbow mussels for reintroduction into Holly Creek. Propagation for a second mussel species, the Coosa creekshell (Villosa umbrans), will take place in 2022 and introduction to the watershed is planned for 2023.
Protecting Coastal Communities

Innovating for People and Nature

Georgia’s low-lying coastal communities face increasing risks to human safety, wildlife habitat and economic stability from flooding caused by sea level rise, storm surge and other impacts of climate change. More than a third of Camden County residents live within the 100-year floodplain, and half of the land is classified as wetlands. We are working in partnership with Camden County and others to create the county’s “Rise Ready” coastal resilience toolkit.

This year, a new Flood Awareness Tool, the Flood Risk App, was made available to help planning officials and future residents of Camden County make informed decisions to prepare for flooding and reduce its impact. The app allows users to search addresses in the county and integrates flood hazard data to generate a personalized impact of current and future potential flood risks. This is one example of how TNC is innovating to protect communities from the threats of climate change.

Land Acquisitions Protect Key Coastal Landscape

On February 25, 2021, the 11,000-acre Cabin Bluff tract—the last large, undeveloped portion of Georgia’s coast—became permanently protected. We closed on the sale of 8,000 acres of Cabin Bluff to the State of Georgia for designation as a new wildlife management area. TNC facilitated the sale of the remaining 3,000 acres of the historic property in Camden County to the Church of Eleven22, a congregation committed to the long-term preservation of the land.

This milestone comes more than two years after TNC and the Open Space Institute purchased the property. Several government agencies and nonprofit partners aided in the protection of this priority landscape, with more than $2.5 million granted through the first round of Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act funding, a program Georgia voters approved with 83 percent support on the 2018 statewide ballot.

With support from TNC, the Open Space Institute and The Conservation Fund acquired the neighboring 16,000-acre Ceylon property in May. Thanks to the efforts of a visionary group of conservation leaders, more than 27,000 new acres serving as a crucial buffer to the Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay and the Cumberland Island National Seashore are now permanently protected, with thousands of acres publicly accessible.

“Those collaborations give the people of our state beautiful natural areas to explore, provide vital habitat for plants and animals, help clean our air and water and buffer communities from storm surges,” said TNC Georgia Executive Director Deron Davis.

An ancestral home of the Yamassee, Timucua and Muscogee/Creek people, the landscape is a highly diverse mix of salt marshes, tidal creeks, maritime forests and longleaf pine woodlands. It supports many threatened and endangered species, including the manatee, gopher tortoise, wood stork and eastern indigo snake.

We are grateful to all partners on this project, which will continue to protect habitat for critical species in our state.
Last year, we championed The Conservation Fund’s purchase of more than 200 acres of forest known as Lake Charlotte Nature Preserve in southeast Atlanta, and now the City has officially purchased the tract, permanently protecting the property from development.

The protection of Lake Charlotte is one part of a very big vision that TNC Georgia is working with many partners to bring to fruition. We are following a 20-year plan for the area that was inspired by the Atlanta City Design, which includes a massive public greenspace within the South River watershed. Since 2018, we have been working with renowned urban planner, Ryan Gravel, and other community leaders to build momentum around this vision. In 2022, we will partner with the Atlanta Regional Commission, the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County and community members to expand community engagement and local government commitment to the South River Forest.

Now more than ever, we understand that greenspace is a vital component of a healthy, equitable, resilient and thriving city. As Atlanta’s growth continues, greenspace will be necessary to maintain and enhance quality of life for all people.

Georgia’s landscape and plentiful sunshine make our state perfect for providing homegrown solar energy. But the panels that generate this power require a lot of space. Solar facilities in Georgia typically range from 15 to 50 acres, and the conversion of this land to solar generation could exact a heavy toll on environmentally sensitive habitat—and the wildlife, plants and people who depend on it.

In partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the University of Georgia and NASA DEVELOP, TNC Georgia has developed a mapping tool that helps developers identify potential solar energy generation sites that pose minimal impact to sensitive lands and critical habitat.

The Low Impact Solar Siting Tool identifies solar suitability factors such as land slope, solar radiation capacity, and proximity to transmission lines. It also enables users to see where sensitive ecosystem areas are located, including those for threatened species like the gopher tortoise. By giving users the ability to see which areas in the state provide both good solar suitability and low impact on sensitive habitats, the tool can help developers bring facilities to operation quicker and more cost effectively.

This is just one example of how we are working to expedite the smart growth of solar energy in our state. Shifting from fossil fuels to clean renewable energy like solar is essential to achieving the low-carbon future we need to combat climate change. We are proud to help advance solutions like the Low Impact Solar Siting Tool to help secure a clean energy future for Georgia.
Georgia Establishes Sustainable Development Carbon Registry

In May, Governor Brian Kemp signed House Bill 355 (HB 355) into law. A measure with strong support from TNC, this bill expands Georgia’s existing Carbon Sequestration Registry, allows building materials that sequester (or store) carbon to qualify for carbon credits and adds a stand of timber to the list of items that qualify for credits.

HB 355 established the Sustainable Development Carbon Registry by expanding Georgia’s existing carbon registry to enable the creation and tracking of carbon credits that are tied to carbon sequestered in construction projects throughout the state as well as the embodied carbon benefits arising from a whole-building life cycle assessment. This legislation creates a dual pathway for businesses to accrue carbon credits and aims to increase the use of construction materials that sequester carbon, furthering sustainable development in Georgia.

Under the new law, developers will be able to gain carbon credits by utilizing materials and technology that increase the amount of CO₂ sequestered in their buildings, such as CO₂ infused concrete, mass timber and carbon-neutral flooring. The result is a non-regulatory, voluntary and incentive-based system that encourages sustainable development in Georgia and allows our state to benefit from the increasing number of businesses looking to offset their carbon footprint.

GA-FIT: A New Partnership for Drought Response

In southwest Georgia, water is the lifeblood that sustains aquatic ecosystems and a robust agricultural economy. Water from the region’s rivers and aquifers is abundant in most years, but in others, drought makes water scarce and threatens the viability of the local economy and aquatic habitats.

With our support, the region’s farmers use water carefully and have adopted efficient irrigation equipment and practices, yet even with widespread application of water conservation measures, in-stream flows have set record lows in recent droughts. Flows in the Ichawaynochaway Creek Basin, which support many streams and aquifers in the area, have decreased to lower levels over time (with flows close to zero during the drought of 2011-2012), threatening the availability of water for aquatic habitat and for use by farmers and communities downstream.

Research funded by TNC indicates that relatively modest reductions in irrigation-water use during times of drought would result in ecologically significant increases in stream flow. In partnership with the Georgia Water Planning & Policy Center at Albany State University, TNC has developed the Georgia Flow Incentive Trust (GA-FIT)—a project aimed at exploring opportunities for innovative water management strategies in southwest Georgia.

Funded by a grant from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, GA-FIT is working with farmers to develop new drought response tools and policies for agriculture. This pilot project will test carefully designed incentives that can sustain farmers while also maintaining healthy aquatic habitats during drought. GA-FIT activities will be focused primarily in the Ichawaynochaway Creek Basin, but project findings will help inform our work throughout Georgia and beyond. 
UGA Joins TNC to Support Community, Conservation at Fort Benning

The University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government has joined the River Valley Regional Commission and TNC to create recreation and economic opportunities along 35,000 acres of conservation lands around Fort Benning. Spread across six midwestern Georgia counties and one county in Alabama, this land serves as the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) for Fort Benning, providing the base with a natural barrier to prevent training and testing from interfering with the surrounding communities and maximizing the benefits to people and nature.

The goal of the collaborative partnership is to work with nearby communities to develop a cohesive plan to grow, promote and better utilize outdoor activities in the region, such as hiking, rafting and hunting. In addition to recreational and economic development, conservation of the land will continue to be guided by TNC.

“This is a unique part of the state because it’s on the Chattahoochee Fall Line,” noted Deron Davis, the executive director of TNC Georgia and chair of the ACUB advisory board. “What you find is really complicated soil structures. You find soils that look like the beach, but you also find soils that look like the Piedmont or in some rare cases the mountain. What the soil looks like dictates what the plants look like, and what the plants look like dictate what the animals look like. So by having a relatively tight geographic region with a mix of soils so close together gives you things that are almost anomalous. The complexity and the variety is what makes this area unique.”

We have been Fort Benning’s ACUB partner since 2007. While the U.S. Army’s needs require that the buffer land remains undeveloped, it can still provide outdoor recreation opportunities for local communities and the economic industries that accompany them. As this plan progresses, TNC Georgia will help ensure that protected ACUB lands continue to provide a safe habitat for the red-cockaded woodpecker, the gopher tortoise and many other threatened, endangered and at-risk species.

We’re exploring the positive impact conservation can have on rural communities.

Dugdown Corridor Acquisition Connects Critical Lands

We plan to acquire and perform restoration work on a 2,351-acre addition to the Dugdown Corridor that will help create a connected conservation corridor from Georgia to Alabama. The Dugdown Corridor is the far western anchor of the southern Appalachians and represents the largest opportunity in north Georgia for landscape-level restoration of the globally rare montane longleaf ecosystem. TNC in Georgia and Alabama, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and other partners are collaborating to protect this approximately 300,000-acre corridor, which would ultimately connect the Paulding Forest and Sheffield Wildlife Management Areas in Georgia with the Talladega National Forest in Alabama.

Climate resiliency data indicates that the Dugdown Corridor is highly resilient to climate change, which means the landscape will be crucial to supporting a diversity of species as they migrate to adapt to the changing climate. In addition to planting tree seedlings and applying prescribed fire to restore the Dugdown’s longleaf pine forest in 2021, TNC Georgia has partnered with Clemson University to monitor the non-coastal pine snake (Pituophis melanoleucus), a species of conservation concern, as we work to connect and enhance this distinctive landscape.

People and Nature Thriving Together

This page: Katherine Thomas Photography; © Mark Godfrey/TNC; inset left to right: © Regeneration of longleaf pine forest within a natural open burned area within Fort Benning; © Mark Godfrey; Fine snake © Katie Owens/TNC; Dugdown Corridor Acquisition Connects Critical Lands: © Katherine Thomas Photography; © Mark Godfrey/TNC; © Regeneration of longleaf pine forest within a natural open burned area within Fort Benning; © Mark Godfrey; Fine snake © Katie Owens/TNC; nature.org/georgia | 17

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Rarely does one have the chance to meet a living legend—let alone work alongside that person. This year, we celebrate the 30-year career of coastal Georgia’s conservation legend, director of coastal and marine conservation Christi Lambert. For three decades, Christi has led a wide range of programs and built strong partner relationships that have resulted in significant conservation wins for our state. She has played integral roles in the development of living shoreline pilot projects and the protection and stewardship of more than 225,000 acres of coastal and riverine lands through acquisitions and easements. Thanks to Christi’s dedicated efforts, the lower Altamaha River flows through an unbroken 42-mile corridor of protected lands. Those who know Christi are likely to describe her in much the same way. Please join us in honoring Christi Lambert, who has captured our imaginations in awe-inspiring ways for the past 30 years.

Mary Beth Jordan

Leading Through Change

When Mary Beth Jordan ascended to TNC Georgia Board Chair in July 2019, no one could have foreseen the challenges ahead. As it turned out, no one was better poised to help Georgia meet them.

Under Mary Beth’s leadership, TNC in Georgia completed its three-year, $36 million Nature Unites Us campaign and permanently protected the 11,000-acre Cabin Bluff property on the Georgia coast. Now in her last year as board chair, Mary Beth shares insight on her experience and her deep commitment to nature.

What will take away from your time as board chair?

If I look at the work we accomplished over the past couple of years, it’s indicative of the power of pulling together committed volunteers and smart, dedicated staff and partners to achieve conservation at scale. Historically, I’m inspired by the story of Jane Yarn purchasing Egg Island, and how one person set into motion what is now this amazing conservation corridor along the Altamaha River. More recently, a similar convening of staff, volunteers and partners led to the protection of Cabin Bluff. I will never forget how audacious, bold and risky this endeavor felt early on. Seeing that project up close deepened my appreciation for the talent, knowledge and commitment of TNC Georgia staff. I am proud of our accomplishments. But what I am reminded of again is the power of partnership to conserve special places like Cabin Bluff for people and nature.

What was the biggest challenge you faced during your tenure?

Definitely the pandemic and finding ways for trustees to stay connected during a disconnected time. I also remember wishing that we as trustees could have done more to support TNC staff through this challenging time, but we were even more impressed by their work, adaptability and dedication to accomplish so many conservation wins despite these challenges.

What gives you hope for the future?

In Georgia, we have a small but mighty team doing important work. What’s unique about TNC is how local expertise is connected to a larger global network of staff that collectively can shape and deliver on the transformational work needed to generate solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss. It’s that local work combined with similar projects around the world that positions TNC to work on solutions at a scale matching the enormity of the challenges we face. And that gives me hope for the future.

Christi Lambert

Director of Coastal and Marine Conservation

30 Years of Coastal Conservation Excellence

“Rivers capture the imaginations of people,” says Christi Lambert, noting the feeling of awe the Altamaha River continues to inspire within her.

INTERVIEW

Mary Beth Jordan © Eliot VanOtteren Photographer, Inc.

Christi Lambert © TNC; Katie Owens collecting fish samples © Sherry Crawley/TNC

CELEBRATING OUR STAFF

Katie Owens

Upper Coosa Program Director

2021 Fisheries Conservationist of the Year Finalist

Congratulations to our Upper Coosa Program Director Katie Owens, who was a Fisheries Conservationist of the Year finalist recognized by the Georgia Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. For fifteen years, Katie has worked tirelessly on aquatic and terrestrial conservation efforts in northwest Georgia. Her projects include pine snake and montane longleaf pine restoration and research, stream channel restoration, riparian restoration and protection, aquatic connectivity and implementation of agricultural best-management-practices. Katie is a strong advocate for the conservation of rare fish, mussels and other aquatic resources, and her extensive knowledge of conservation issues and methods makes her an invaluable member of our team.

Mary Beth Jordan © 2021 TNC; Katie Owens collecting fish samples © Sherry Crawley/TNC

CONGRATULATIONS
The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

Visit us online at nature.org/georgia
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LEAVE A LEGACY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

What better legacy is there to leave for Georgia than your commitment to protecting the Earth for generations to come? Whether you are taking those first steps toward planning your estate or are in the process of updating your estate plan, The Nature Conservancy is here to help. Don’t let another day pass by.

LEARN MORE TODAY
(877) 812-3698 | legacy@tnc.org | nature.org/legacy

The Nature Conservancy cannot render tax or legal advice. Please consult your financial advisor before making a gift.

Clockwise: Little St. Simons Island © Parlee Chambers; American green tree frog © Clay Bolt; Little St. Simons Island © Parlee Chambers; Adorable baby Wood Storks with Mama. © Jennie Malone/TNC Photo Contest 2019; Little St. Simons Island © Parlee Chambers;