## Natural Resources Stewardship Committee (NRSC) News (09.24)

## **Aquatic Parrot Feather Update**

Parrot Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), a non-native invasive aquatic plant, has been confirmed in Lake Atagahi. The NRSC Lake Management Subcommittee (LMSC) is working with GM Jim Whitmore to determine appropriate actions to manage the weed, monitor the effectiveness of mitigation practices, and to protect water quality long term.

A task force has begun mapping clusters of the weed in and along the shoreline of Little Atagahi and the causeway. CF resident Al Byrne has volunteered to conduct a drone survey of the lake and map the results.

**Drone Setup**-Pictured to the right are LMSC members Joe McMurray, Mitch McCullers, Dave Maeda, NRSC chair AJ Longware, and Al Byrne. (Photo credit Roger Witmer, NRSC)

The initial survey indicates that larger healthier clusters are located mainly around docks and in shaded areas. However, the drone was also able to pick up images of the weed just under the surface. (Photo credits Al Byrne)

What You Can Do-To reduce the spread of the parrot feather, members are asked to watch for and avoid boating through aquatic plant clusters. Residents are asked to avoid pulling the plants because fragmenting rooted plants can and will produce new plants wherever the wind and waves carry them. Lakeside property owners are asked not to use chemical treatments along the lake berm or in the lake. Any chemicals used in these areas must be applied by a certified CFPOA maintenance individual.

It is imperative that, if you take your boat to another lake inside or outside of Connestee, you avoid aquatic hitchhikers and follow the <u>CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY process</u> as recommended by the NC Aquatic Weed Control Program.

**Future Work-** The herbicide to treat the parrot feather that was recommended by the Transylvania County Agricultural Services (Aquathol-K) works most effectively in early spring when there is active growth. The LMSC is still evaluating mitigation techniques and may recommend a chemical application test be conducted. The community will receive further details before testing begins.

After mapping the parrot feather distribution on Lake Atagahi, Lakes Ticoa, Tiaroga, and Wanteska will be surveyed to locate



any parrot feather. To help plan with this future task force work, residents on those lakes are encouraged to take a photo (with location on) of any potential clusters at their dock and forward it to cfpoanrsc2021@gmail.com. Thank you for your assistance!

# Wildlife Watch From the NRSC

## Marbled Salamander

#### By Judy Merrifield, NRSC Volunteer Writer

There are 60 different species of salamanders in North Carolina, but the *Ambystoma opacum*, commonly known as the marbled salamander, is our state amphibian. With the assistance of the NC Herpetological Society the designation became official on June 26, 2013.

As nocturnal adults living in damp woodlands close to ponds and streams, they feed on live prey such as worms, insects, slugs, and snails. The marbled salamander is considered non-poisonous but it will secrete poison from its tail glands if confronted by a predator such as snakes, owls, raccoons, and skunks.



Male and Female Marbled Salamander Photo by Jeff Hall <u>NC Wildlife</u>

Female marbled salamanders are dark gray with silver bands while the males have more of a white band to attract the fairer sex during breeding. Both are 3 to 5 inches in length and have a stocky build. Life span is approximately 3 to 4 years. Unlike most amphibians, breeding takes place in the fall with the female laying 50- 100 eggs in a dried pond. The female then guards the eggs until the rains come and fill the pond, even over the winter if need be.



Eggs will hatch when the pond is full and are classified as larvae at this stage of their metamorphic life. The larvae will spend 2 to 9 months in the water, growing stronger and larger while eating plankton and other underwater invertebrates.

Conservation of <u>ephemeral ponds</u>, ponds that only remain wet for a short time, and upland forests are vital for the marbled salamander. Habitat connectivity and sustainable management of our forests must be a priority not only for this creature and other amphibians, but for the entire ecosystem that we call home.

You can learn more about the habits and habitats of the marbled salamander and dozens of other native herps at the NC Wildlife Resources Commission website under the <u>Species tab</u>.

# Fall Is Power-Eating Time for Bears

### From the NRSC and BearWise.org

Bears' appetites are biologically programmed to go into hyperdrive in the fall because they need to put on a thick layer of life-sustaining fat before they turn in for the winter. This annual power-eating marathon is called hyperphagia.

Hyperphagia is in full swing now because many fruits and berries (soft mast) are still available, calorie-dense acorns and nuts (hard mast) are ripening, and bears' body clocks are ticking louder and louder. During hyperphagia, bears are like Olympic athletes in training.

They must consume ten times as many calories as they need during the spring and summer if they are going to "den up"



in tip-top shape. That means finding 20,000 calories a day or more. That's a lot of nuts and berries.

## **Finding Enough Food**

Depending on the availability of natural foods, bears may need to travel long distances well outside of their normal ranges to find enough calories. They seldom sleep more than three or four hours a day. They are sleep-deprived, constantly on the prowl, and myopically focused on finding as much food as possible. So, they can be more willing to take risks, like venturing near homes, campgrounds and trails, and trying to cross busy highways.

In fact, bears can be so absorbed in their mission to find food they may not see, hear or notice you. And they can be protective of the food sources they find, whether that's a bunch of fallen apples, a bird feeder or an overflowing garbage can or dumpster.

### **How To Prevent Problems**

#### You can help to prevent problems for the hard-working bears in your area.

- Review the <u>BearWise Basics for Home</u> and <u>Outdoors</u>.
- Make sure anything that might attract a bear is safely out of sight, smell and reach.
- Be extra alert when driving or walking at night.
- Check the yard before letting out your pets.
- Know what to do if you encounter a bear.
- Share what you know with neighbors and others in your community.

#### Thanks for doing your part to live responsibly with black bears.

#### Learn more about black bears...

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