

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

December 2023

## Fire in the mountains

It has been a relatively busy fall wildfire season here in Western North Carolina. In November 2023, rangers from Holmes Educational State Forest (ESF) and DuPont State Recreational Forest (DSRF) assisted with wildfire suppression efforts close to home. While assigned to the Poplar Drive Fire in Henderson County, Ranger Dwigans assisted with initial attack, structure protection and mop-up operations. He also assisted with mop-up operations for the Cascade Lake Fire in Transylvania County that partially burned acreage at DSRF. Holmes ESF Supervisor Susan Fay was dispatched for nine days to support the NCFs Incident Management Team coordinating wildfire suppression efforts in the region.

*Photos by Ranger Dwigans*



### Holmes Educational State Forest

1299 Crab Creek Road

Hendersonville, NC 28739

828-692-0100

holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov

#### Forest Hours:

**March 1 - Oct. 31**

Monday: Closed

Tuesday - Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday - Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Nov. 1 - end of February**

Monday: Closed

Tuesday - Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday: Closed

Closed state holidays

#### Youth Group Campground:

**March 1 - Oct. 31**

Visit our website for more  
information.

[www.ncesf.org/holmes.html](http://www.ncesf.org/holmes.html)

Susan Fay, HESF supervisor

EJ Dwigans, educational ranger

Visit all of North Carolina's state forests. From the coast to the mountains, we have state forests across this great state. See NCFS website for more information, [www.ncforestservice.gov](http://www.ncforestservice.gov)



## When is wildfire season?

Each year, Western North Carolina experiences two seasons when fire danger is elevated. Historically, peak months for the state's fall wildfire season are October through December while spring wildfire season tends to peak March through May. Fall wildfire season historically is more intense in WNC while spring season is more intense in Eastern NC. Many factors can contribute to increased fire danger during these months including but not limited to:

- Drought
- Increased debris burning
- Increased flashy fuels due to leaf fall
- Abnormally warm temperatures
- Early freezes
- Windy conditions



## Farm City Day

In October 2023, Forest Supervisor Susan Fay traveled to Jackson Park in Hendersonville to participate in Farm City Day. Beginning in 1955, Farm City Day is a local agricultural fair that celebrates the contributions agriculture has made to our community. In addition to many educational displays, hundreds of people turned out to celebrate with live music, tractor displays, a 4-H village, pony rides, hay rides, apple slings and a petting zoo. The event was hosted by the Henderson County N.C. Cooperative Extension Office and the Kiwanis. The N.C. Forest Service promotes agriculture through science-based forest management.



Photos by Susan Fay



## Updates on HESF's self-guided activities!

**iNaturalist** project "Holmes Educational State Forest Bioblitz!" has **580 observations** that include **302 different species** by **78 observers**. Visit the iNaturalist website at [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org) for more information. Click on "community" then "projects" and search for "Holmes Educational State Forest Bioblitz!". **Next Goal! Reach 325 species by April 2024!**

**ecoExplore**'s current badge challenges: **Mammalogy Field Season Badge** is open until the end of December. Earn a **Mammal Signs Field Focus Badge** if you start by Dec. 31 and finish within one year. For more information on The North Carolina Arboretum's ecoExplore initiative, visit [www.ecoexplore.net](http://www.ecoexplore.net).

# Free educational offerings at HESF

## HESF Inclement Weather Policy

Hikes may be cancelled in the event of inclement weather such as thunder and lightning. Notifications will be sent out via phone and email. Due to the unpredictability of weather patterns in our area, cancellations may occur as late as the morning of the scheduled meeting date.

## Liability Waiver Forms

Individuals or groups participating in activities and/or programs at HESF will need to sign a liability waiver before or upon arrival.

Photo by EJ Dwigans

## 2024 Guided Wildflower Hikes

April 6 at 2:00 p.m.

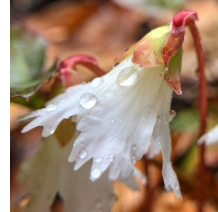
April 20 at 2:00 p.m.

May 4 at 2:00 p.m.

May 18 at 2:00 p.m.



Dwarf crested iris (*Iris cristata*)



Oconee bell (*Shortia galacifolia*)



Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)

Join N.C. Forest Rangers for a moderate, three-quarter mile hike to observe and identify spring wildflowers! This unique forest ecosystem supports an incredible diversity of plant life, and different wildflowers can be observed each month. Each hike is limited to ten participants and will meet near the main kiosk in the parking area. We recommend bringing comfortable shoes, a water bottle, a camera and a wildflower field guide if you have one.

These programs are free but you **MUST SIGN UP** to participate. Call now (828 692-0100) or email [holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov](mailto:holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov) to reserve your spot! Each guided hike will only last a few hours, but there is so much more to learn about and explore on your own time at Holmes ESF! We offer hiking trails, picnic areas and a variety of educational exhibits. Category II and III NC EE certification and CEU credit are available for participants upon request.



Blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)



Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)



Look for our next newsletter in spring 2024.

The N.C. Forest Service is a division of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.  
Steve Troxler, Commissioner

