

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

Page 1. Volume 4. Edition 3. Fall 2019

## A Visit from Smokey Bear

This fall, we enjoyed visits from local and regional schools including Jackson School of Alternatives from Sylva and homeschoolers from Greenville and Spartanburg counties in South Carolina. The number of students who were enrolled in education field trips from August to mid-November totaled 1,077. On Sunday, Oct. 20, Susan Fay, our supervisor, attended the Grand Opening of the Kids in Park Track Trail at Mills River Park. On Wednesday, Nov. 6, after listening to “The True Story of Smokey Bear” by the warmth of a picnic shelter fire, kindergarteners from Mills River Elementary School were visited by Smokey Bear. In September, Ranger EJ Dwigans led a group of mushroom enthusiasts from Brevard High School on an exploratory hike for mushrooms to include in their science laboratory reports.



Students from Mills River Elementary visiting with Smokey Bear



We wrapped up the fall education season with a trip to T.C. Henderson School of Science and Technology in Rosman. During our periodic visits, we engage students in grades K-5 with programs such as Investigating the Four Seasons, Tree Life Cycle, Interdependence in Ecosystems, Leaf Relay, Fire Weather, Sounds, Skins and Skulls, Soils Investigation, Pollinators and Goods from the Woods.

Teachers are already contacting us about field trips for the 2020 education season. We appreciate your interest in our field trip opportunities and your loyalty to our programs! We are pleased to facilitate fun, hands-on, investigative learning experiences in the outdoors for your school. Remember that our schedule is first-come first-served, and April is a busy time for field trips at Holmes Educational State Forest. The early bird gets the worm!

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

Page 2. Volume 4. Edition 3. Fall 2019

## Extended Picnicking Opportunities

Starting in 2019, the Forest will remain open for a longer season. In previous years, we closed the gates the Friday before Thanksgiving, but we now stay open through Nov. 30. Our scattered picnicking sites are an excellent place to gather with friends and family during the week of Thanksgiving. You can reserve the covered picnic shelter for up to 60 people for free, and we will provide the firewood.



A family enjoying their favorite lunch spot



On Sunday, March 1, 2020, the forest will open for the new season. We begin taking shelter and group campground reservations Jan. 2. Over the years, these facilities have become more popular. Our recommendation is to secure your weekend plans a few months in advance!

## Training the Ranger

Ranger EJ has worked diligently with colleagues and advisers to complete a thorough agency-led professional development program called Ranger Training. The comprehensive courses provide practical demonstrations of responsible forest management practices. Through this training, forest technicians are prepared to advise private landowners, enrolled in programs such as the Forest Development Program, during various forestry growth stages such as species inventory, harvesting, planting and reforestation.



Logging inspection site located in Buncombe County. On the far left and right sides, notice skid trails and tree stumps in the cut-over.

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

Page 3. Volume 4. Edition 3. Fall 2019

## Visiting Local Colleges and Universities

This fall semester, rangers from Holmes Educational State Forest had the opportunity to facilitate programs or attend awards events at four of our local higher education institutions. On Aug. 19, professor Michelle Pearce of Warren Wilson College invited Amy Kinsella to speak, as part of a career panel, to students in an Intro to Environmental Education course. To coordinate a field trip to the forest for students enrolled in the biology program at Brevard College, rangers worked with Dr. Megan Keiser of the education department and with students enrolled in the Methods of Teaching course at Brevard. During the field trip, students learned about the principals of forest management and primary successional habitats. Ranger Susan Fay engaged them in a discussion about habitats, trophic levels and food webs, and Ranger EJ Dwigans led them on a guided hike to explore the carbon cycle. A special thanks to Ranger Jane Dauster for traveling from DuPont State Recreational Forest to facilitate a Project Learning Tree activity called "Counting Carbon."

On Oct. 23, Amy Kinsella attended an official N.C. Certified Environmental Educator awards ceremony at UNC Asheville (UNCA) where student Emily Avery was recognized. The event was organized to bring attention to networking opportunities that forage connections between classroom teachers and professionals in the outdoor field. Emily plans to be a middle school science teacher and hopes to use the knowledge and skills gained from this certificate in her classroom. Emily attended a Project Learning Tree event as well as a guided hike at Holmes ESF, and we hope in the future she will bring her students to the forest. The ceremony was attended by faculty of the Environmental Science and Education departments, the UNCA Chancellor and Provost and the Secretary of The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

Finally, on Oct. 28, Ranger Amy was invited by professor Melissa Watkins of the environmental science department at Montreat College to speak with her class. Students were introduced to the principals of forest management and tools, including prescribed fire, to help meet management objectives. The students learned about the fire triangle, methods of heat transfer and burning objectives such as improved wildlife habitat, hazard fuels reduction and improved species richness. Students also gained information about career planning, professional wildland fire qualifications and ways to become involved with the N.C. Forest Service county rangers in their area. We are happy to welcome Grace Keith from Warren Wilson College and Payton Maness from Brevard College as new volunteers at our forest!



Left to right: UNCA Provost Kai Campbell, Amy Kinsella (UNCA alumna and Certified EE) certificate recipient Emily Avery, N.C. Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Michael S. Regan, UNCA student and EE Certified Julie Neumark, UNCA professor and EE Certified Alison Ormsby and UNCA Chancellor Nancy J. Cable.

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

Page 4. Volume 4. Edition 3. Fall 2019

## Because of you, the Forest blossoms under a new ray of sunshine!

On Thursday, Nov. 7, Ranger Amy Kinsella attended the Awards Banquet organized by the N.C. Cooperative Extension for the Henderson County Master Gardeners. The event recognized the work of master gardeners across the county, including the work done in the Pollinator Garden at Holmes ESF. In April, we started with 37 varieties of plants, and now, we have 54 different species. Thanks to the in-kind donations of our volunteers as well as donations from the networks connected to Bullington Gardens and the N.C. Cooperative Extension. Congratulations on 97 total hours of volunteer time in 2019! We appreciate the planning and leadership from Donna Gatnarek and her husband Donn. A special thanks to Kim Biggerstaff for making extra visits to water newly transplanted flowers, ensuring their success especially during the hot weather. Thanks to Joe Robustelli and Becky Davis for working long hours, without complaint, in all weather conditions. Each of you made a big impact on the success of our pollinator garden, and we can't thank you enough for your commitment to the garden and your willingness to work with us!



April 2019



August 2019



Pictured left: Steve Pettis, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Ranger Amy, Master Gardeners Donna Gatnarek and Kim Biggerstaff at the awards banquet



Pictured right: Donna Gatnarek, Becky Davis and Joe Robustelli

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

Page 5. Volume 4. Edition 3. Fall 2019

## Caterpillars in the Forest

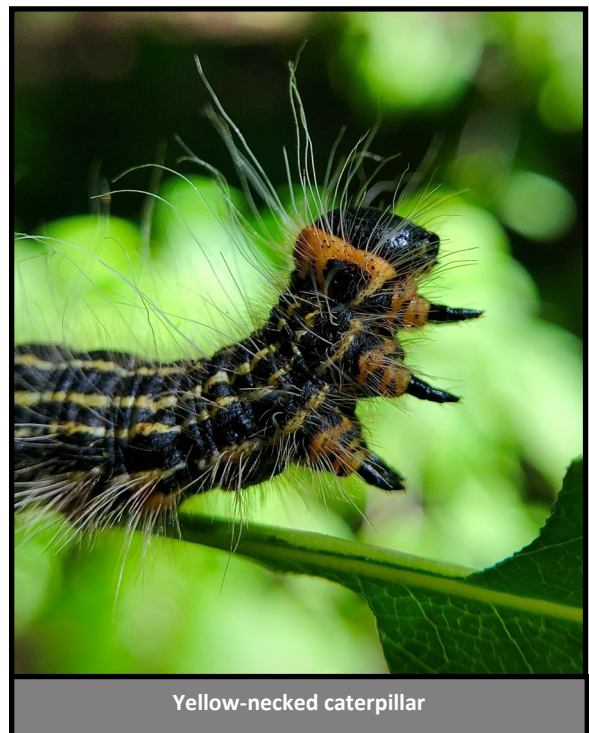
There are between 6 and 8 million species of insects on Earth, many of which may seem alien to us. They are, however, one of the most abundant life forms on this planet. One of my favorite types of insects is caterpillars. This fall it's been hard to walk through the forest without getting some kind of caterpillar on your clothes or in your hair. While most caterpillars are herbivores, about 1% are carnivorous and feed on other small insects. Some even feed on animal parts such as wool, horns and hooves! Many caterpillars only feed on one species of plant, which happens to be a plant species of value to humans. As a result, the caterpillars that feed on it become pests. They feed voraciously and some caterpillar species, like the tomato hornworm, can increase their size ten-thousand-fold in less than 20 days. Caterpillars are a food source for many animals, and as a result, have developed many unique defense mechanisms that include but are not limited to camouflage, mimicry, venomous spines, scary appendages, bad taste, thrashing, evasive feeding behaviors, etc. Some caterpillars are even able to sequester toxins from the poisonous plants they consume, essentially making themselves toxic to predators!



Monarch caterpillar



Spiny Oak Slug caterpillar (Venomous)



Yellow-necked caterpillar

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

Page 6. Volume 4. Edition 3. Fall 2019

## Caterpillars in the Forest cont.



Catalpa Sphinx caterpillar on a chanterelle

There are at least six species of venomous caterpillar in North Carolina. These include the Spiny Oak Slug caterpillar, the Saddleback caterpillar, the Puss caterpillar, the Hag Moth caterpillar, the Io Moth caterpillar, and the White Flannel Moth caterpillar. Reactions to their stings range from a mild, itching/burning sensation to severe allergic reactions that may require hospitalization. However, most reactions can be compared to those produced by stinging nettle.

Caterpillars are an important part of any forest ecosystem because eventually, they become butterflies and moths that help pollinate native plants and trees here at Holmes ESF and all over the state! Want to identify the caterpillar you just found to determine if it's friend or foe?

You can invest in one of the many caterpillar field guides specific to Eastern North America or join one of the many caterpillar/insect identification groups on Facebook. Smartphone apps like iNaturalist can also help you narrow down your finds! Alternatively, feel free to contact me at [ej.dwigans@ncagr.gov](mailto:ej.dwigans@ncagr.gov) for help in identifying North Carolina caterpillars.

~ Ranger Dwigans



Imperial Moth caterpillar



Flower Crab Spider preying on a caterpillar

# The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

Page 7. Volume 4. Edition 3. Fall 2019

## 2020 Program Schedule

Do you have an interest in forestry-related program topics? School field trips, Scout programs, family events or professional development? We are happy to work with your topic of interest if you have a group of 10 or more participants. In the coming year, we will continue to partner with rangers at DuPont State Recreational Forest for additional offerings. Look for us on the trails, at the Visitor Center or at Guion Farm.

### Winter Tree Identification Hike at Holmes Educational State Forest

Friday, Jan. 17, 2020 (2-4 p.m.)

Friday, Jan. 31, 2020 (2-4 p.m.)

Discover the tricks to winter tree identification. We will identify 10 trees and discuss the basics of branching patterns, buds, twigs, fruit and other tree physiology. Wear comfortable hiking shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather. RVSP required. Call 828-692-0100 or email [Holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov](mailto:Holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov). Space is limited.



**Stay tuned for spring Ephemeral Wildflower hikes starting in March 2020. We try to do these on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-noon and will have the schedule available on our website soon.**



### **Unless Specified, Programs Require an RSVP**

For more information, contact Holmes Educational State Forest at (828) 692-0100.  
1299 Crab Creek Rd. Hendersonville, NC 28739

Email: [Holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov](mailto:Holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov)

Website: <https://www.ncesf.org/holmes.html>