

# The Talking Forest

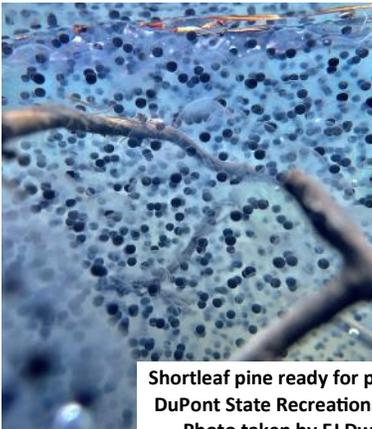
Holmes Educational State Forest

Winter/Spring 2022

## Holmes Educational State Forest Rangers' Favorite Moments of 2021

Each year since 2018, Holmes ESF rangers have selected photos that capture their favorite moments from the previous year. This year, EJ and Susan each chose three photos and here are the results.

Wood frog eggs in front ditch.  
Photo taken by EJ Dwigans.



Shortleaf pine ready for planting at  
DuPont State Recreational Forest.  
Photo taken by EJ Dwigans.



Rock labyrinth after volunteer work in March  
2021. World Labyrinth Day is May 7, 2022.  
Photo taken by EJ Dwigans.



You never know who you'll run into  
on the forest! Photo taken by Susan Fay.



Peaceful! Photo taken by Susan Fay.



Sign up for a basic Tree ID this year.  
The first one is in May. Look for other  
opportunities throughout the year.  
Photo taken by Susan Fay.

## Holmes Educational State Forest

1299 Crab Creek Road  
Hendersonville, NC 28739

828-692-0100

holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov

### Forest Hours:

**March 1 — Oct. 31**

Closed Mondays

Tuesday — Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Saturday — Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Nov. 1 — end of February**

Closed Mondays

Tuesday — Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Closed Saturday — Sunday

Closed State Holidays

### Youth Group Campground:

**March 1 — Oct. 31**

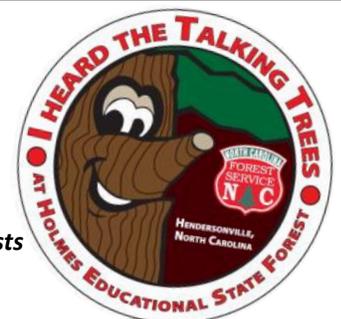
Visit our website for more  
information.

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

Susan Fay, ESF Supervisor

EJ Dwigans, Educational Ranger

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



**Forest Improvements!**

Added new "You Are Here" map holders to major trail intersections. Photo taken by Susan Fay.



Added new fencing in picnic area with the help of Bob from the DuPont maintenance branch. Photo taken by Susan Fay.



With help from Bob, Sammy and Nathan from the DuPont maintenance branch, we cleaned up the mess left after cutting hazard trees. Photo taken by Susan Fay.



Volunteer in Action! Duane Bowker is still adding invasives to the pile. Multiflora rose doesn't stand a chance! Photo taken by Susan Fay.



For more information about the Museum of Flight and Aerial Firefighting, visit [www.museumofflight.us](http://www.museumofflight.us). Photo taken by Susan Fay.

**Wildland Aerial Firefighting**

Sometimes as you travel, you find unique places that are unexpected and brighten your day. During summer 2021, one HESF ranger wandering through Wyoming found such a place. Tucked behind a roadside rest area, just outside Greybull, is The Museum of Flight and Aerial Firefighting. Established in 1987, the museum details the history behind the use of aircraft in wildland firefighting. Inside a small building, you can find different exhibits detailing what types of aircraft have been used and some of the ways in which fires have been attacked by aircraft. An outdoor space features some of the historical planes used for an up-close and personal view. One of the most interesting facts discovered was the United States started using aircraft, specifically Jenny biplanes, to patrol wildfires as early as 1919!

Part of a North Carolina forest ranger's job is fighting wildfires. This is often accomplished in various ways such as with hand crews, tractor plows, boats and aircraft.

Rangers will use aircraft to help locate and scout a fire, provide operational support and deliver fire-suppressing materials. Today, the N.C. Forest Service operates 17 fixed-wing airplanes and five helicopters to support wildland firefighting across the entire state.



Special thanks to the NCFS I&E branch for providing photos of Forest Service aircraft. Photos taken at the new NCFS aviation hanger in Duplin County.

## Slither into Spring!

Photos by Ranger Dwigans

As temperatures slowly rise across Western North Carolina, some of my favorite critters begin to emerge from their winter dormancy. That's right, I'm talking about snakes! Here at Holmes Educational State Forest, you can find 18 out of the 38 species that live in North Carolina. Out of the six venomous species native to North Carolina, only two, timber rattlesnakes and copperheads, can be found in our area. Although many people have a fear of these creatures, snakes are often shy and prefer to avoid our presence altogether. Removing or killing snakes is not a practical solution as it only opens up the area for another snake to move in. Snakes are a beneficial part of any ecosystem, but that doesn't mean people necessarily want to see them around their homes. The best way to keep snakes away from your home is to make your property less appealing to them in the first place. Decluttering your yard and keeping bushes trimmed will help remove areas where snakes are likely to be found. No matter the condition of your yard, you should always be aware of your surroundings to reduce the chance that you will disturb a snake. That said, some snake enthusiasts will actually try to encourage snakes to live around their homes by placing flat boards, tin or rocks around their property.

Probably the most common and longest snake here at Holmes Educational State Forest is the eastern ratsnake (*Pantherophis alleghaniensis*) or what folks would think of as a typical black snake. These snakes are excellent climbers and will feed on rodents, lizards, frogs and birds. If you have bird houses around your home, it is important to use predator guards to keep black snakes from invading the nest.



Another common species here at Holmes ESF is the ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus*). These snakes often find their way into basements and outbuildings. The ring-necked snake's main defense strategy is to curl up and roll over, exposing its brightly colored belly.



### Slither into Spring!

The fangless eastern garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) is a small venomous species whose venom only affects reptile and amphibian prey species and does not affect humans. As a child, I would always find them in my mother's garden and thought they were called garden snakes for the better part of my life.



Smooth green snakes (*Opheodrys vernalis*) are always a joy to find in the forest. Their bright green coloration is unique among native North Carolina species and their incessant tongue-flicking makes them seem highly curious.

### Slither into Spring!

Many nonvenomous species are often mistaken for copperheads and killed. Both copperheads (*Agkistrodon contortrix*) and timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*) are pit vipers and can be identified by the slits between their eyes and their nostrils. Pit vipers also have more triangular shaped heads than other nonvenomous species in our area.



Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*)  
Venomous



Northern water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*)  
Nonvenomous



Timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*)  
Venomous



### Helpful Resources:

**Snakes of North Carolina** app — created by Hatch, Bahram, and Thomas with Davidson College's Herpetology Lab and compliments the book **A Guide to the Snakes of North Carolina** by Beane, Brammer, Braswell, Busack, Gibbons, Grayson, Hill, Palmer, Richardson, Sealy, Sheriff and Willson. Also check out this link by NCWRC **Species in North Carolina**, [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

### Updates on HESF's Self-Guided Activities!

**iNaturalist** project "Holmes Educational State Forest Bioblitz!" has **235 observations** that include **153 different species** by **42 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!"

**ecoExplore's** current badge challenges: **Botany Field Season Badge** is open until the end of April. Earn a **Pollinator Mission Badge** if you start by April and finish within one year. The **BioBlitz Event Badge** is also available throughout the month of April. For more information about 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 canceled 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.



Photo by EJ Dwigans

### 2022 Spring Wildflower Series

Call HESF at 828-692-0100 to sign up, or email [holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov](mailto:holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov).

Join North Carolina forest rangers for a moderate, ¾ 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 10 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.

April 9: 2-4 p.m., April 16: 2-4 p.m., April 17: 2-4 p.m., April 23: 2-4 p.m., April 30: 2-4 p.m., May 1: 2-4 p.m., May 14: 2-4 p.m., May 15: 2-4 p.m., May 28: 2-4 p.m., May 29: 2-4 p.m.

### Other Free Educational Programs

**Birding Exploration — April 13: 8:30-11 a.m.** Call HESF at 828-692-0100 to sign up, or email [holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov](mailto:holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov).

Join professional birder Kevin Burke for a birding exploration of Holmes Educational State Forest. For most of his adult life, Kevin has been leading tours and helping people get outside. His passion for birds and birding has grown into a full-time career. Learn more about Kevin's trips through Ventures Birding Tours here: <https://www.birdventures.com/index.html>.

On this hike, we can expect to see/hear warblers (such as Ovenbird, Black-throated Green Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush and Northern Parula), tanagers (Scarlet) and vireos (Red-eyed and Blue-headed) among other species. This program is limited to 15 participants. The group will meet in our main parking area at the kiosk. It is recommended that you bring comfortable shoes, a water bottle, binoculars and a bird field guide if you have one.

**"Lichen Are Everywhere" Introduction to the World of Lichens — May 3: 10 a.m. - noon.**

Call HESF at 828-692-0100 to sign up, or email [holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov](mailto:holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov).

Lichens grow on almost every tree in Western North Carolina. They can live hundreds of years and they can grow on rocks, trees, fence posts, buildings and bare earth. Lichens are often the first organism to colonize rock and can absorb everything they need from the sun and the air around them.

Join Keith Bamberger, North Carolina Division of Air Quality specialist, for this free event to learn the basics about lichens, participate in a Lichen Safari, learn the three forms of lichens and identify a few common species of lichen. Participants will also look at things which might live on a lichen as well as the lichen's ecosystem companions -- mosses, fungi and plants.

Participants will also learn how lichens can tell us about the health of the air while exploring Citizen Science tools made available online by the N.C. Division of Air Quality and NC Stream Watch. Using the Hawksworth Rose Lichens Scale, we will learn how to assess the health of the air around them.

Don't be surprised if you begin seeing lichens everywhere -- from the tops of mountains, in wetlands and streams and in the forests. It is estimated that lichens cover 7% of the Earth's surface.

If you have any questions about the workshop please contact Keith Bamberger at [keith.bamberger@ncdenr.gov](mailto:keith.bamberger@ncdenr.gov) or 828-296-4500.

This program is limited to 20 participants and will take place in our covered shelter with short walks in the surrounding forest.

**Introduction to Tree ID — May 18: 2-4 p.m.** Call HESF at 828-692-0100 to sign up, or email [holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov](mailto:holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov).

Join N.C. Forest Service rangers for a two-hour basic tree identification stroll. Participants will discover how to identify trees by observing helpful features and characteristics including leaves, bark and branching patterns. Participants will also discover different terms that aid reading your favorite tree guide. The walk will be approximately 1.5 miles on level ground.



**Look for our next newsletter in spring/summer 2022.**

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

