

The Talking Forest

Holmes Educational State Forest

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Winter Maintenance Projects

The forest will re-open for the season on Tuesday, March 12 at 9am. Every year, the forest is closed from the Friday before Thanksgiving until the second Tuesday in March. Winter is an excellent time for our staff to complete building and facilities maintenance, professional development and program planning for the calendar year. This winter has been extremely busy with various outdoor projects. Our covered picnic shelter is getting a metal roof installed and is available for free for groups up to 60; reservations are required.



This covered picnic shelter is getting a metal roof.

The main parking lot and roads are in the process of



being graded and will have a new layer of gravel added. This road project is a product of teamwork between Holmes ESF, DuPont SRF, Transylvania County N.C. Forest Service staff and the District 1 Equipment Operators. Regrading the road will help to keep sediment from polluting nearby streams.



Several winter storms brought down mature white pine trees and large crown limbs from other shade trees. Damage caused by these storms resulted in a shade tree

crown pruning project to maintain visitor safety in the common picnic and educational gathering spaces. If you have experienced similar damage, refer to the N.C. Forest Service Urban Forestry page on our website: https://www.ncforestservice.gov/Urban/Urban_Forestry.htm and look for the "Trees and Storms" tab.



A pruned oak

Top photo: road grader used to resurface the parking lot and roads.

Bottom photo: one of the resurfaced roads

The document, "Caring for Storm Damaged Trees" is a very helpful place to start. After perusing the online resources, you may also want to make a call to your County Ranger with any questions. In the picture to the right, professional pruners made three cuts to bring these large branches down. This method maintains the branch collar, and allows space for the wound wood to heal over the cut.

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Nurse Logs

Author and photo credit Ranger Amy Kinsella

If you have ever observed a decaying log with new growth protruding from it, it is called a nurse log. Decaying wood in the forest can become a nutrient rich germination site for a fallen plant seed. Examples of this recycling of nutrients can be found in several locations at Holmes Educational State Forest. Near the helicopter and forest fire equipment display is a white pine stump with a black birch growing from the center. Over the past four years, the stump has decayed and degraded while the new sapling has increased



Black birch in white pine stump. Eastern Hemlock germinated on stump

in size and height. As the sapling grows, its roots thicken and stretch towards the soil. In the second photo, an Eastern Hemlock seeding is surviving in a stump covered in moss. We facilitate several education programs for youth that elaborate on these concepts more thoroughly including “Tree Rings”, “The Life Cycle of a Tree” or “Forest Soils Investigation.” Contact us if you have ten or more participants in a group and would like to learn more about forest ecology.

Featured Fungi

Author and photo credit Ranger EJ Dwigans

Hygroscopic Earthstar (*Astraeus hygrometricus*)

Astonishingly this fungi reacts to the amount of water present in the air around it. During dry conditions the “arms” are wrapped closely around the center puffball to protect it from the elements. As the humidity increases, the arms unfurl to fully expose the puffball. Sometimes the arms unfurl so far that they actually raise the puffball off the ground. Similar to other puffballs, its spores are released when falling rain drops land directly on it.

Jelly Tooth aka Cat’s Tongue (*Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*)

This mushroom is edible and reportedly delicious once candied. This one was found attached to a dead white pine.



Hygroscopic Earthstar



Jelly Tooth aka Cat’s Tongue

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A Special Thank You to All Our Generous Volunteers!

We are over the moon to have such devoted volunteers to help us with daily tasks in the forest. In 2018, we recorded over 182 volunteer hours through contributions from individuals and groups. Volunteers help us improve and maintain the pollinator garden and trails, as well as help with educational projects in the office. We would like to thank the Hendersonville Master Gardeners, as well as Eileen Irish and Alice Peltier, for their assistance in the Pollinator Garden. As you can see from the photo on the left, the monarch butterflies and caterpillars had plenty of milkweed for their food and shelter needs last summer.



We would like to thank the Carolina Mountain Club for their continued trail rebuilding and maintenance. This winter they installed two culverts on the Talking Tree Trail and the Crab Creek Trail; resurfaced a footbridge for improved traction; and assisted with storm debris after two large winter storms. We'd like to thank Equinox RTC of Hendersonville for their help removing storm debris and we look forward to working again with them this spring.



Pictured CMC Members: Ed Hauschild and Bill Miller

Additionally, we'd like to thank Linda White for her continued time with us each week. She has helped with trail maintenance and debris removal, trail signs, organizing clerical files and helped with efforts to create the new Junior Ranger Activity Booklet. Thank you also to all the Scouts and Troops including Troops 61 and 51. If you are an individual or group with two or more hours to offer, please call us at 828-692-0100 to discuss volunteer opportunities at Holmes ESF.



Pictured Linda White and storm debris

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2019 Program Schedule

We are excited to invite you to sign-up for the following FREE programs. RSVPs will be accepted 30 days before the event date, unless otherwise specified. Additional programs can be scheduled if the group has 10 or more participants. Programs qualify for NC EE Category II or III and/or CEU. This year, we will continue to partner with rangers at DuPont State Recreational Forest for additional offerings.

(Stay tuned for additional summer and fall programs.)

Winter Tree ID Hike: Friday, March 15 (2-4pm)

Discover how to identify 10 trees by observing helpful features and characteristics including twigs, bark and branching patterns, 1.5 mile stroll. *(Spaces filling fast!)*

Forest Wildflower Hike: 10am-12pm

A moderate, ¾ mile hike to observe and identify early spring wildflowers. Hiking through this diverse forest ecosystem, you can expect to observe different species based on the date of the hike you sign up for.

Saturday, March 23

Saturday, April 13

Saturday, April 20

Saturday, May 11

Owl Prowl DuPont State Recreational Forest: Friday, April 12 6:30-8:30pm

Learn about owl species in our area and then sit quietly and listen for them in the forest.

Guided Hikes at DuPont Recreational State Forest

Wednesday, June 5 (9am-12pm)- Wintergreen Falls (3 miles)

Wednesday, June 26 (9am-12pm)- Cedar Rock (2 miles)

Guided Fire Ecology Hike at DuPont State Recreational Forest 9am-12pm

Wednesday, July 24

Wednesday, July 31

Learn about the goals and objectives of using prescribed fire, as well as its application and effects.

Guided Mushroom Hike: 10am-12pm

Ranger E.J. Dwigans will discuss the history, toxicity, ecology, biology, medicinal uses and edibility of mushrooms while guiding participants on a forest stroll.

Saturday, June 1

Saturday, June 22

Saturday, July 13



Unless Specified, Programs Require an RSVP

For more information contact Holmes Educational State Forest (828) 692-0100

1299 Crab Creek Rd. Hendersonville, NC 28739. Email: Holmesesf.ncfs@ncagr.gov, or visit the website

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

