



FALL 2019

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### NEIGHBORHOOD ECOLOGY CORPS YEAR ONE STUDENTS BEGIN THEIR N.E.C. JOURNEY

From August fifth through the ninth, students recently enrolled in the Neighborhood Ecology Corps (N.E.C.) traveled to Temple Flat Rock Nature Preserve to immerse themselves in the natural world. With Center for Human-Earth Restoration president, Randy Senzig, and three student counselors led these young people through scientific studies and nature awareness. The student counselors, Nicolas Worsley, Taleigha Chambers, and Dominic James and the new students participated in Voyages of Discovery, soil studies, forestry surveys, and daily games. After the summer camps, we are looking forward to the adventures the 2019-20 year will bring, and we can't wait to get started exploring the natural world together.



Students on a hike through Temple Flat Rock

### N.E.C. OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

#### STUDENTS LEARN VALUABLE LEADERSHIP SKILLS AT HAW RIVER STATE PARK



Students participating in leadership training

Advanced students in the N.E.C. finished the 2018-19 year by traveling to Haw River State Park to take part in the Outdoor Leadership Academy. With the help and expertise of Park Staff, students learned critical leadership skills that will help them grow into effective community, and outdoor leaders. We became CPR AED Certified, took part in leadership training, and canoed in the lake with NC State Park Educator Sean Higgins. Over three days, the students transformed from students into leaders who will in the future become N.E.C representatives.

On the last morning of the camp, program instructor Holly Theobald took nine sleepy campers for a sunrise hike, overlooking the pond at the park. Cloudy weather didn't make for a colorful sunrise, but we were able to share in a magical morning moment. As we were sitting on a boardwalk over wetlands, one student cried out "Look!" Everybody quickly glanced over to catch a mink scurry through the wetlands, through a shallow creek, and disappear into the tall grass surrounding the pond.

## PARKS WITH PURPOSE

### BAILEY DRIVE GREENSPACE CELEBRATION

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, C.H.E.R. President Randy Senzig and five N.E.C. students joined Walnut Creek Wetland Park staff, NCSU Water Resources Research Institute staff, and local community members to celebrate the park and introduced the community residents to new ideas about how the park can be improved. N.E.C. students made “earth bracelets” for children attending the celebration, which serve as a reminder to our connection to the natural world. Our students also taught the public about watersheds, what storm-water runoff is and how it impacts local and state water quality.



N.E.C. Students teaching public visitors the effects of storm-water runoff using an Enviro-scape

## POETRY AT HISTORIC YATES MILL COUNTY PARK

### FIRST C.O.R.E.S. OUTING SPARKS CHILDREN'S IMAGINATION

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, C.H.E.R. President Randy Senzig met with language arts students and their teachers from Athens Drive High School at Historic Yates Mill County Park to explore nature poetry. For two hours, students learned Native American observation skills, hiked and reflected their experiences to create their own poetry. This event marks the beginning of the 2019-20 C.O.R.E.S. (Character Education through Observation, Reflection, Ecological Restoration, and Scientific Literacy) year.

We are looking forward to working with the following schools this year:

Ballentine Elementary School

Lincoln Heights Magnet Elementary School

Fuquay-Varina Middle School

Athens Drive High School

Throughout the school year, C.H.E.R. staff will work with the incredible teachers of these schools to “bring the hearts into the hearts of all” to their students.

# N.E.C. EXPLORES LOCAL NATURE PRESERVES

## STUDENTS TRAVEL ON EXPEDITIONS TO HORSESHOE FARM AND WILKERSON NATURE PRESERVES

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, ten N.E.C. students traveled to Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve with C.H.E.R. program instructor Holly Theobald and C.H.E.R. volunteer John Connors of the Wake County Audubon. We were extremely fortunate to learn from Mr. Connors, who is a wildlife guru and frequent visitor to Horseshoe Farm. We started the day with an exploratory hike around the meadow, where we saw a plethora of wild animals. From holding a rough earth snake to observing a fresh praying mantis egg cluster, the students saw first-hand how valuable nature preserves are to protecting native ecosystems.



Taleigha, Year 5 student, teaching Year 1 Student Jay-quwan how to hold a rough earth snake



Standing by the removed Japanese stilt grass

Then, on October 9<sup>th</sup>, we traveled to Wilkerson Nature Preserve. Grayson, who works at Wilkerson Nature Preserve, led us on a tree-identification hike. As we were making our way through the woods, a herd of deer popped up from a clearing no less than a hundred feet from the trail. Most ran, but two remained to check out our group. When they realized that we were no threat, they disappeared into the brush. Afterwards, we ventured to another section of the preserve with Assistant Park Manager Bryan England. He led our group to a site where native orchids are being grown, alongside with the invasive Japanese stilt grass. It quickly covers the forest floor, which inhibits the growth of new trees and other native flora. Within forty-five minutes, our group had removed ten large bags of the grass, leaving a clear spot in the forest for new trees, and hopefully orchids, to grow.

# N.C. STATE UNIVERSITY CALDWELL FELLOWS

## STUDENTS FROM N.C. STATE UNIVERSITY ENRICH C.H.E.R. PROGRAMING

As the 2019-20 N.E.C. began, six students from North Carolina State University in the Caldwell Fellows program reached out to President Randy Senzig dedicate their time and services to C.H.E.R. The Caldwell Fellows Program develops the next generation of self-aware, globally-minded humans that engage in creative, conscientious leadership. With values originating from the example of Chancellor John T. Caldwell, the Caldwell Fellows prepares promising NC State students to serve and thrive in their communities and careers. Their program supports the growth of Fellows throughout their college education by providing opportunity and space for conversation, reflection, experiential-learning and servant-leadership education. We are grateful for the service of these incredible students, and we are looking forward to collaborating with them further this year to enrich and improve C.H.E.R. through editing our website, and participating in our various programs.

## Nature Now

### Great Blue Herons

The majestic great blue heron is gathering in the piedmont. These wading birds can be found in both saltwater and freshwater habitats, and the streams, rivers, marshes, ponds, and lakes in the piedmont make it an ideal place for the large bird to congregate. They will continue to fly south, some as far as the Caribbean, as autumn progresses.



Photograph courtesy of: Rinus Baak/USFWS

## Upcoming Events

### **N.E.C. Expedition on November 1 to Historic Yates Mill County Park**

We will leave Walnut Creek Wetland Center at 9:00 am and will return at 4:00 pm. Transportation will be provided by the City of Raleigh via bus. Students will hike, participate in team-building games, and learn how to play African Drums.