

## The Best of Did You Know 2022

From the Natural Resources Stewardship Committee  
And the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

**White Tailed Deer-** Did you know that supplemental feeding of wildlife does more harm than good because it causes habituation and spreads diseases such as salmonella and rabies. At the NRSC Deer Talk, NCWRC wildlife biologist Justin McVey discussed White Tail Deer habituation, habitat, and habits. He explained that corn piles are especially detrimental to deer because deer physiology is not capable of digesting corn feed.

The entire presentation including the Q & A session that followed can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/NRSCDeerPresentation>



Photo Courtesy Jim Farrey

**Snow Bird Habitat-** Did you know that North Carolina's year-round resident birds are joined by short-distance fall migrants which primarily eat fruits and seeds that persist on plants or on the ground. As migrant birds, including cardinals, chickadees, juncos, robins, and sparrows, fly south they seek out high energy fruits to help offset the energy lost during migration. Yellow-rumped warblers, also known as myrtle warblers, eat the fruits of the wax myrtle in the winter.

Because the importance of different foods changes seasonally, it is best to provide a variety of food producing plants in your yard. Include early- and late-fruiting species along with plants that produce winter seeds. If possible, leave a portion of your yard or garden unmanicured to allow fruit- and seed-producing plants to grow, especially during late summer, fall, and winter. Plants that produce fruit, such as blackberry and pokeweed, also harbor insects eaten by birds. To learn more about how to create a native landscape for year round bird habitat, visit <https://bit.ly/BkyrdBirds>.

**Oh Deer!** Did you know that in the wild, the life expectancy of white tailed deer is 2-5 years for bucks and 3-6 years for does. Deer age is determined by examining teeth in the lower jaw bone. According to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, the deer density in the WNC Mountains is less than 15 per sq. mile. However, in other parts of the state deer density is 30 to 45+ per sq. mile. For more information about the white tail deer in NC, visit <https://bit.ly/NCWCdeerprofile>.

**A BIT SQUIRRELY!** Did you know that a squirrel may dig several decoy holes before caching that sacred nut? The method of "deceptive caching" is intended to fool other squirrels that may be watching. According to the NCWRC Gray Squirrel Profile, which is available at <https://bit.ly/EGSquirrel>, the eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) is the most common of the five squirrel species and it is found in every county in NC.

Squirrels can be seen busily digging hundreds of holes in preparation for winter. Several studies have been conducted to determine how squirrels organize and locate their stashed nuts and it may not be as random as all those holes appear. Squirrels actually organize their nut hoard, which suggests advanced memory skills. You can read more about their squirrely habits at <https://bit.ly/SquirrelyStash>.

**Bobcat (Lynx Rufus) Profile-** Did you know that early settlers called the bobcat “woods ghost” because they are elusive, solitary animals and often go undetected. Bobcats are generally wary of people and will usually run away when detected. Their presence alone in a neighborhood is not a cause for concern. In fact, due to their elusive nature, it is a rarity to see a bobcat. However, recently there have been numerous sightings of adult bobcats and/or kits crossing the roads in Connestee Falls. Please drive with extreme caution, especially at dawn and dusk when bobcats and other wildlife are most active.



NCWRC Kits Photo: Summer Trimball

The bobcat gets its name from its short tail (about 5 inches long) that is dark above and white below, coloring that may serve a signaling function. An adult stands from 20 to 30 inches at the shoulder. The bobcat is a carnivore that favors early successional prey such as rabbits and mice. They may also consume birds, cotton rats, white-tailed deer, rodents, gray squirrels, raccoons, opossums, and snakes. To learn more about bobcat habitat and habits go to <https://bit.ly/NCWRCbobcatprofile>.

**Wild Habitats-** Did you know that wildlife populations are generally highest in the summer. Most wildlife species breed in the spring and feed their growing young with summer’s food bounty. According to the NCWRC, “wildlife populations generally begin to decline in the fall and continue falling until the following spring. That’s because they outstrip their habitat’s ability to feed them. In biological terms, the animals exceed the “carrying capacity” of the habitat.” In some cases, “limiting factors” determine the carrying capacity of a habitat. Limiting factors are deficiencies in a habitat that prevent populations from increasing.” Feeding wildlife interferes with the natural carrying capacity of a habitat. It is imperative that humans not feed or interact with any wild animals in an effort to keep wildlife wild. The NCWRC has a new publication called North Carolina Wild Places: A Closer Look. You can view or download the book at <https://bit.ly/NCwildhabitats>.

**CF Trail Guide-** Did you know that a newly published 2022 *Connestee Falls Hiking Trails Guide* is now available to download to your phone and/or print a copy? The new guide provides current maps for the 20+ miles of trails, hiking hints, a wildflower guide, and Hiking Trail Rules for Use. Each map identifies the parking and trail access points and is accompanied by a description and difficulty level. A pdf of the hiking guide can be accessed on the NRSC website at <https://bit.ly/CFHikingTrails>. Happy Trails to you!

**Copperhead Snakes-** Did you know that copperhead breeding has been recorded both in the spring and in the late summer to early fall? A female retains her eggs inside her body and gives birth to from 2 to 18 living young, usually in August, September or early October. For more information about how to identify a copperhead snake as well as its habits and habitat go to <https://bit.ly/NCWRCcopperhead>.



NCWRC Photo: Jeff Hall

**Black Bear Denning-** Did you know that black bears (*Ursus americanus*) do not experience a classic “hibernation” like that of bats and some rodents? Black bears do put on additional weight in autumn to prepare for winter denning. You can read about the physiology of black bears during the denning season at

<https://bit.ly/NCWRCBearsHibernate>

They build dens in cavities of live trees, hollow logs, caves, rock outcroppings, cavities in the ground, or in a thicket. Usually black bears construct nests of leaves, sticks, and grass within the den, which often resemble giant bird nests.



In North Carolina, den entry can occur as early as November or as late as January, though male bears in the coastal plain region may be active throughout winter. Most North Carolina bears emerge from their dens in March or early April, depending on the weather and mobility of their cubs. To learn more about black bear habitat and habits go to <https://bit.ly/NCWRCBlackBearProfile>.

**Return of the Otters-** Did you know that river otters (*Lontra canadensis*) have been sighted recently in Lake Atagahi and Lake Ticoa. Once one of the most widely distributed mammals in the United States and Canada, by the mid 1930s the river otter had become virtually extinct in western North Carolina. In the early 1990s the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) released otters in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to help restore the population. According to the NCWRC “The American river otter is a graceful and beautiful addition to many North Carolina rivers. Sighting one can be an exciting occasion for boaters, fishermen and other outdoor enthusiasts because of the creature’s secretive nature and relative rarity in some waters.”



To read more wild facts about the river otter go to

<https://bit.ly/OtterProfile>.

The NRSC encourages all residents to help keep wildlife wild. Please do not feed or approach otters, deer, bear, or any other wildlife. Habituating wild animals to human ways can endanger the animals and humans. To learn more about the hazards of feeding wildlife visit <https://bit.ly/HzdsFeedingWildlife>.

## Looking Forward to 2023!

The NRSC Education Committee will restart the “Focus on Connestee” program in the spring of 2023. In addition to repeating some topics from last season, there will be outings and/or presentations about the geology of CF, forest types, and the impacts of invasive species. Announcements and registration information will be published in the Friday Flyer and on the [NRSC website](#) several weeks in advance.

The NRSC welcomes your input and assistance. A list of volunteer opportunities is available for your review at <https://bit.ly/NRSCVolunteer>. We look forward to hearing from you!