

Natural Resources

Stewardship Committee

Meet the NRSC Members pictured from left to right: AJ Longware, Roger Witmer, Graham Smith, Kathryn Hill, Ray Jackson, Janet Saucier, and Paco Candal. The committee focus is on three key CF stewardship goals: to keep wildlife wild, to protect water resources, and to protect native habitats.

The NRSC Lake Management Subcommittee

(LMSC) sought proposals from universities and consultants to perform a comprehensive study of our lakes and streams. The subcommittee recommended Clemson University's proposal to perform this work, and in March, the CF Board approved that proposal. Clemson University will provide: 1) a comprehensive watershed survey, addressing run-off, sediments,, nutrients, submerged habitats, seasonal water quality, best water release strategies, invasive land and lake species, including parrot feather; 2) fishery surveys, including fish species composition, predator to prey analyses and largemouth bass modeling; and 3) a comprehensive Lake Management Plan with recommendations about how Connestee Falls should manage our lakes and streams for recreational use and long-term sustainability.

This 2 ½ year project will begin in May and will ultimately produce a long-term lake management plan in 2027. You may see Clemson University personnel along our lake shores and on our lakes in gas-powered boats, doing surveys and taking samples. (Clemson's use of this type of watercraft has been approved by our General Manager.) Please greet them courteously as they do their work. Direct all comments or questions about the study to cfpoa@connesteefalls.com.

The NRSC Invasive Plant Subcommittee (IPSC) is preparing to begin summer work to locate, identify, and mitigate a variety of invasive plants (IP). EcoForesters recently submitted a draft of the CF Forest Management Plan (FMP), which identifies invasive species as a threat to the health of our forests. Species include Chinese silvergrass, bush lespedeza, Japanese stilt grass, Asiatic bittersweet and multiflora rose. Eco recommends that the NRSC continue *"Educating community members and encouraging them to replace high-risk non-native plants with native landscape plantings"* as effective in reducing the risk and slowing the spread of non-native IP. For more information visit the [invasives species section](#) on the NRSC website at connesteefallsnrs.com. The NRSC has also developed a [list of native, deer resistant, and fire resistant plants](#) using the sort function of the NC Extension Gardeners Tool Box.



Help Stop the Spread of Parrot Feather

Residents are asked to avoid taking boats from lake to lake. If you do take a boat to/from another lake inside or outside of CF, please follow the [CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY](#) procedure.

Parrot feather is a highly invasive aquatic weed that has established colonies in Lake Atagahi and Lake Tiaroga. The NRSC and LMSC have been working with Jim Whitmore to develop a mitigation plan, which will require cooperation from the entire CF community. Ticoa and Wanteska are currently free from parrot feather but it will require everyone to help to keep it out.

What Bears Do In June

From [Bearwise.org](https://www.bearwise.org)

June at a Glance: Yearlings leave mom and search for food, shelter and a place of their own. Adult males travel far and wide looking for mates. Nursing moms venture farther from home base searching for food. Cubs keep growing and developing. Spring lessons can be life-changing.



Yearlings Move Out

Bears that were born last spring and denned up with mom this past winter are now 18-month old yearlings. If all goes well, they'll be the size of a medium-sized dog by the end of June, although their fur coats can make them look larger. Yearling females are often allowed to move in next door to their mom. Yearling males are strongly encouraged to move out and go find a new territory of their own, so most young bears wandering far from home are males.

Spring Lessons Can Be Life-Changing

They may look big and furry, but yearling bears are all trying to figure out how to live without their mom's help. They are often lonely and lack the fully developed survival skills of an adult bear. They are also hungry and inquisitive and will instinctively check out anything that seems as if it might be a source of food.

Like human teenagers, yearlings are at a very impressionable stage of life. If they quickly discover that human places should be avoided, they will learn to support themselves as wild bears. If they find the backyard pickings are easy, they start down a road that is often a dead end. No matter how cute they look and how hungry they are, never feed or approach them. The best thing you can do to help yearling bears grow up wild is to make sure there's nothing around your home to attract them. ([Download our Be BearWise at Home Checklist.](#))

Adult Bears Look for Mates

Female bears that are now empty-nesters as well as mature females that didn't give birth last winter will soon be ready to mate. Female bears seldom leave their home ranges; for the good of the gene pool, they let the males come find them. A female bear may mate with several different males, and it's not uncommon for litter-mates to all have different fathers. Chances are these two black



bear cubs are siblings with the same mom but different fathers. Black bears can be many colors, including just about every shade of brown. (photo: NPS / Neal Herbert)

Ranges, not Territories

Adult bears have home ranges, not exclusive territories. A home range needs to be large enough to provide food, water, shelter and mates. The size of a home range varies greatly, but a male bear's home range can be up to 300 square miles, typically five or six times larger than a female's living in the same general area. Bears share their home ranges with other bears of both sexes, but not at the same time except for a male and female during breeding season or yearlings that are still hanging out with each other.

Cub Nursery School Continues

Moms are still nursing, but cubs are learning how to supplement their diets with more natural bear foods. Cubs take after their moms in several ways: they are super-smart, have a keen sense of smell, learn quickly, have good memories and are very adaptable. So, if mom teaches them to avoid people-places and forage for natural foods, they learn to live wild. But if mom shows them how to raid the garbage or bat down bird feeders or sends them in through the pet door to see what's in the kitchen, the lessons learned can put their lives in danger.

Where's the Bear Food?

Natural spring and early summer foods like tender leaves and grasses and developing plants are not as calorie-dense and nutritious as the nuts and fruits that ripen later in the year, so all bears travel further looking for food. Mother bears usually have between one and three hungry, demanding mouths to feed. Moms start traveling further looking for food, and cubs are left home alone for longer stretches of time, usually near the den or underneath a handy "sanctuary tree" they can climb in a few seconds.

What's on the June Menu?

Black bears are omnivores; they will eat pretty much anything with calories. The bulk of their spring and early summer diet is what people think of as a salad topped with whatever protein might be available – insects, carrion (dead animals), fish, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Nursing mothers need more calories to stay healthy enough to keep producing milk for the cubs and may actually lose weight until more calorie-dense foods become available later in the year and cubs start eating more on their own.

Make it a [BearWise](#) June

Now you know the reasons bears and people cross paths more often in June. Explore our many resources that will help you avoid attracting bears and stay safe at home and outdoors. Thanks for living BearWise and doing your part to keep bears wild. Top photo: Tom Harrison

BearWise®. Created by bear biologists. Supported by State Wildlife Agencies.

Dedicated to helping people live responsibly with black bears.

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Protect CF Gardens and Forests from Invasive Worms

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly from the NRSC

In general, earthworms are considered harmless, beneficial residents of the soil in agriculture and home garden areas. They break down dead and decaying organic matter into rich humus soil that supports plant growth, and dig tiny channels that aerate soil and improve drainage. However, even the common (European) earthworm will deplete the forest floor of leaf litter and nutrients that native forest flora needs to flourish. (Watch [My Forest Has Worms](#) video.)

In WNC and in most other parts of the US, two invasive worms that are of major concern, the Asian jumping worm (top photo) and the hammer head (bottom photo). These worms first arrived in America in the early 1900s, tucked away in the soil of exotic potted plants. In recent decades these invasive species (as well as the more common earthworm) are now being found in natural forested ecosystems, which ultimately destroy those forest floors.

Asian jumping worms are also known as crazy snake worms, Alabama jumpers, and Jersey wigglers because they move more like a snake and can flip a foot off the ground, which is why they are used as fish bait. These worms are easy to find as they live in the top 6 inches of soil and create castings (waste), which will look more like coffee grounds than soil as in the middle photo. Jumping worms destroy common earthworms by wrapping around them and digesting the entire worm from the outside in.



The jumping worm looks a lot like the common earthworm but there are noticeable differences such as color and the location/size of the reproductive ring. The common worm moves slowly with its head (end closest to the ring) stretched in the direction it is going and then it pulls the rest of its body forward.



Hammerhead flatworms are about 1/8 inch wide and 1 foot long, with a rounded hammer shaped head. (Yes, they are here in Connetsee.) Avoid cutting it because the worm segments will regenerate into more worms.

To protect our forests as well as our gardens, it is critical to identify and eliminate these "bad worms" as soon as they are discovered. To destroy the invaders and their small yellow eggs, pick them up with a gloved hand, place them into a bag with salt, and dispose of them in the garbage.



Worms are also very sensitive to vinegar so consider carrying a spray bottle while gardening to spray and kill them. To prevent further invasions be sure to check the dirt in the pot of plants that you purchase at a store/nursery or receive from friends including those available at the upcoming Mountain Gardeners plant sale.