

Natural Resources Stewardship Committee (NRSC) Notes (06.24)

Bold Natural Resources Stewardship Plan Promotes A Sustainable Future

After a meticulous two-year endeavor and CFPOA Board approval, the NRSC is proud to present the Natural Resources Stewardship Plan (NRSP)-a comprehensive blueprint designed to promote the long-term preservation of our natural splendor. This plan is the culmination of a collaborative effort involving various organizations both within and outside of Connestee Falls.

The plan addresses the most important and impactful components of our native ecosystem such as wildlife (with particular attention given to bears and deer), water quality of lakes and streams, forests, and other native habitats. Each of the sections provides an overview of the component, a description of the current issues with an approach to address the issues, and recommended actions, including the development of a Wildlife Management Program, a Lake Management Plan and a Forest Management Plan. The NRSP is available to download at <https://cfpoanrsc2021.wixsite.com/website>. Members are encouraged to review the plan and submit any questions or comments to the NRSC at cfpoanrsc2021@gmail.com.



The NRSC In Action

The NRSC has established three new working groups; a Lake Management Subcommittee (LMSC), an Exotic Invasive Plant Subcommittee (EIPSC), an Education and Outreach Subcommittee (EOSC), and a CNA Task Force (CNATF). These groups have been charged with implementing the recommended actions in specific sections of the NRSP and are outlined in the newly released Community Action Plan. Each committee consists of an NRSC liaison and other CF committee and/or community members.

The LMSC has been charged with reviewing past and current water quality analysis data, conducting a Lake Management Study, and developing a long term Lake (and stream) Management Plan.

The EIPSC has been charged with evaluating the current status of non-native invasive plants within Connestee including plant species, quantities, locations, and best methods of removal.

The EOSC has been charged with organizing and implementing programs and events that will provide opportunities for CF members to connect with the natural environment and encourage a community wide spirit of stewardship to protect our natural splendor.

The CNATF is working with forest specialists from Ecoforesters to conduct a study of the CF forests and develop a long term Forest Management Plan. The plan will include recommendations to promote native forest health and mitigate the risk of forest fires.

What can you do to help? First, if you have not yet read the NRSP, please do so because it provides an abundance of information about CF's natural resources and what we, as a community, need to do to protect our natural surroundings. Second, you can learn more about the various species of flora and fauna in CF by reading the "Did you know...?" articles in the Friday Flyer. Third, you can visit the NRSC website regularly to see what the NRSC is doing and take on the Monthly Nature Challenges. Last but not definitely not least, please visit the NRSC [VOLUNTEER](#) page to read about volunteer opportunities and "Sign Up" for topics and tasks that interest you.

Wildlife Watch From the NRSC

The Eastern Box Turtle

By Judy Merrifield, NRSC Volunteer Writer

Not only is the Eastern Box Turtle (Terrapene Carolina Carolina) North Carolina's State Reptile, it is quite a survivor with an average life span of 25 to 40 years but can live as long as 100 years. The adults have few predators due to the fact that their lower shell (plastron) can hinge up to the upper shell (carapace) closing like a box.



Resident Box Turtle
Photo Courtesy of Judy Merrifield

Hibernation for these marvelous creatures is from October through April. Males have a slight depression in their lower shell and 4 toes on their hind feet. They typically have red or orange eyes and brighter colored shells than females. Females have brown eyes and less curved rear toes. They do not reproduce until the age of 10 years, when beginning in June they tend to seek out sunny areas in which to lay their eggs. Then, they will return at night to dig a hole and lay between 3-8 eggs.

At this time, the nest is very vulnerable to raccoons who can get the scent of freshly overturned soil. Other predators of young turtles include skunks, coyotes, ants, crows, and snakes because at this stage their shells are still soft. If you are lucky enough to find a turtle's nest in your yard you can cover it with chicken wire but check on it daily and keep it on no longer than one week. (By then the raccoons will lose that scent.) Baby turtles need to eat quickly after hatching and can starve to death in a short time.

"The box turtle is named for its ability to completely box up inside its shell when it feels threatened." [NCWS Box Turtle Profile](#)

The Eastern Box Turtle are omnivores eating berries, mushrooms, earthworms, slugs, snails, and a variety of insects. The seeds that they eat have a higher probability of germinating due to the effect of their digestive system on breaking down a seed. They will bury themselves in leaf matter and come out to eat especially after rainstorms. You're most likely to see them in the early morning hours.

There are several things you can do to enhance your chances of attracting young turtles to your yard. Create an area of low growing, shady moist spots with leaf litter by planting native ferns, wild ginger, or black cohosh. Be sure to leave all mushrooms in place and add a few wild strawberry plants to provide them with a sweet treat.

While it is unlawful to remove a turtle from the wild in North Carolina, if you see one in the road, always carry it to the edge in the direction in which it was headed and not more than 50 feet. Eastern Box Turtles are excellent navigators and incredibly determined to get where they're going. Don't make them cross that road twice—they will because they are very home centered and only have a territory of less than 2 acres. NEVER relocate one because it will become very stressed and try to get back to their home area.

If you ever find a turtle with a cracked shell, is bleeding, or has other injuries, contact Adam Silverberg, Licensed Amphibian and Reptile Rehabilitator, Hendersonville, NC at 352.262.6924. They have a remarkable ability to heal quickly. You can report any sightings to herpmapper.org and/or add your photos to the CF Biodiversity Project at iNaturalist.org. It's important to track numbers for survival of these wonderful creatures.