

A close-up photograph of a black and white wasp perched on a daisy flower. The wasp is positioned in the center of the frame, facing slightly to the right. Its body is dark, and its wings are translucent with visible veins. The daisy flower has a bright yellow center and white petals. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting. The overall composition is centered and balanced.

Cherokee NZ Ecoteam

A Busy Summer

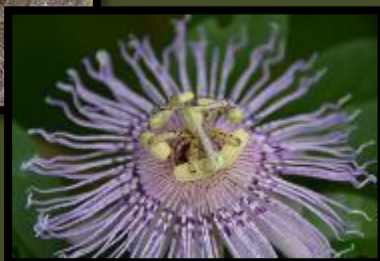


Open Area Management

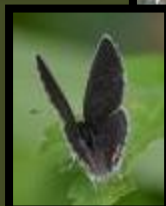
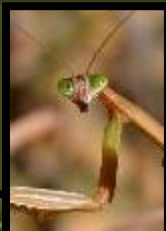
The NZET technicians spent much of the summer mowing and maintaining open areas. They faced challenges of rough and steep terrain, bees and snakes, and equipment breakdowns.



Each year the NZET maintains about 800 of the 2,000 acres of open area habitats across the Watauga and Unaka Districts. They provide diverse habitats including riparian grasslands, wetlands, upland fields, high elevation meadows, old fields, woodlands, and linear corridors. Grasses are a major component, but most of our openings have a diversity of plants. They are islands in the forests that cover our mountains.



They provide foraging, nesting and cover habitat for over 50 species of birds, many reptiles, most of our game species, and countless pollinators and insects. These places are important to our forest users for hunting, camping, watching nature, berry picking, and hiking.





Wolf Creek Project



After years of planning and waiting for the timber to sell, we were finally able to move forward on the Wolf Creek Project. We began restoring 10 fields (80 acres) that were once part of the historic Wolf Creek (Wasp)

Community. Trees were removed through a timber sale and we began clearing slash and stumps to prepare the ground for seeding.



Reid, Andy, and Caylor put in many long days running heavy equipment with some help from Reuben, Skeeter, Marcia, and Jonathan.

The fields will provide a variety of habitats throughout the watershed, including areas for Golden-winged Warblers. The area will be great for hunting, nature watching and hiking when we are finished. The logging is finally complete and we will be working on field restoration for several more years.



After we finished working for the summer, Marcia took a group of hikers from the Carolina Mountain and Hot Springs Hiking Clubs through the old community. They were excited about the project and how it will look in the future. This area ties into the Appalachian Trail at the top of the watershed.



Tracking Bog Turtles

With Zoo Knoxville



Chris and Marcia visited Ripshin Bog to help a Zoo Knoxville intern on his daily track. After digging elbow deep in the mud, they found 6 of these little guys. The zoo has a captive breeding program and has been releasing and studying bog turtles here since 1991. We are hoping to work with the zoo in the future to release these cuties in some of our bogs!



Visit <http://67.210.100.158/documents/Augustnewsletter.pdf> for the Ripshin Bog Turtle story.

AmeriCorps NCCC Team

Thanks to many hours of coordination and planning by Chris, we received a grant for an AmeriCorps crew of 10 volunteers from all over the country to work on wetland restoration and trail projects for 6 weeks. NZET and others pitched in to haul and clean three campers, purchase supplies, and get them ready and in place for the crew to use at Horse Creek Recreation Area.



Despite being diverted to Louisiana on their second week in town to aid in disaster relief, they were still able to accomplish a great deal of work in Allen Gap. They applied herbicide to multiflora rose, removed rhododendron, helped Rueben girdle trees, and removed 100's of pounds of garbage from the wetland. We were sad to see the crew go, but will be ready for them next summer.

http://www.greenevillesun.com/news/local_news/volunteers-busy-weeding-out-forest-invaders/article_4a86ed46-38bo-57fe-9obo-fi69ddeeg6c9.html



Carter County Storm Damage

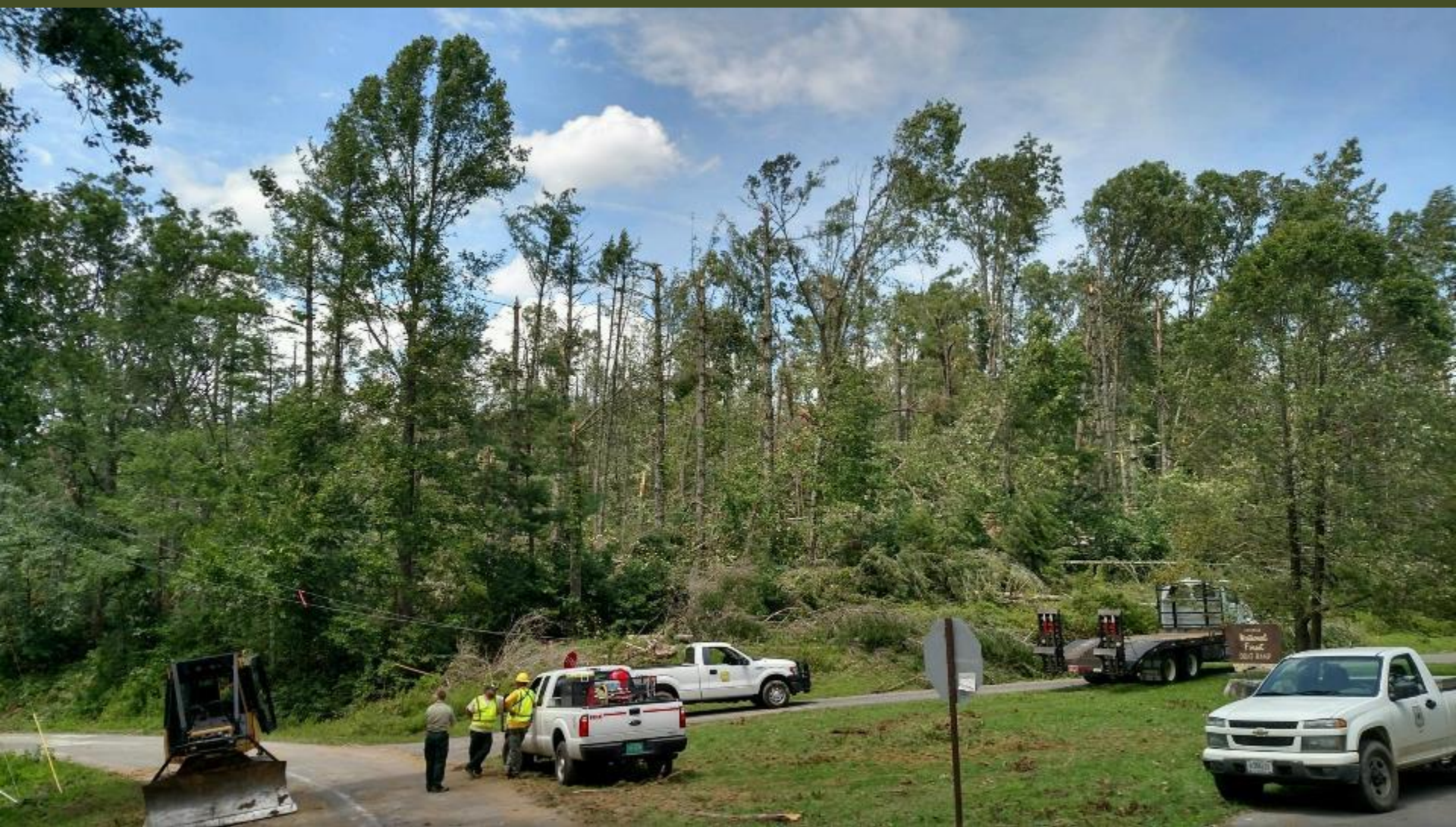


In July a major storm rolled through Carter County, wreaking havoc on private and Forest Service land. The recreation areas and roads along Watauga Lake got hit especially hard. Reuben and Skeeter along with the rest of the Watauga District and many zone employees pitched in to get things cleaned up and going again.



NEPA

Jonathan led Joe and other members of the ID Team to quickly plan a salvage sale in the Watauga Lake storm damage area.



Other decisions that were completed and signed this quarter included Brickbat and Double R Forest Health Projects and the Offset EA, with no objections!

Plant Monitoring



Chris monitored Spreading Avenas at Roan Mountain with NF North Carolina and RO personnel. They developed planning management mitigations to protect populations.



Ginseng

Chris and Joe monitor three ginseng plots annually to determine population health and effects of harvesting.



Despite the extreme drought conditions, our Katy Branch monitoring plot had a record number of new recruits.

ANABAT Surveys

Our ANABAT teams must employ Starsky and Hutch like driving skills to complete the three NZ survey routes. They speed along winding, gravel roads at the neck-breaking speed of 20 mph with the detector on the roof, capturing calls of foraging bats.

Critter Houses



Reuben and Joe, with the help of a volunteer, installed bird and bat boxes at Cherry Flats and Miller Pond.





French Broad Boat Ramp



The French Broad Boat Ramp was in need of repairs, but we did not have the money to do the work with contracting and heavy equipment. We decided to put our backs into it and had a big crew come out for a work day to do it ourselves, saving a lot of money in the process. We enjoyed the day in the river despite the downpour of rain and some sore, aching muscles. Lynn and Reuben brought some engineering and rock placement expertise to the job and our work withstood some high flows later.





Soil and Water Improvements

Andy, Reid and Marcia finished up the final year of improvements in Weavers Bend, protecting riparian areas from vehicle damage and improving dispersed camping sites. We had some great help from Cody, who pitched in to make us more productive.

Thanks to help from Willie and Will, Andy and Caylor were able to decommission the old Wolf Creek Road. Now it is only a trail with no vehicle access.



While we were working at Weavers Bend, we talked to some fishermen who expressed their gratitude for the work we had been doing there for the last three years. They said the fishing was much better now thanks to us. It's nice to hear words of encouragement!



Wild Trout Surveys

Every year for the last 26 years we have been assisting TWRA with monitoring wild trout streams across the North Zone. These surveys allow us to track fish population trends over time, give us information on the annual viability and mortality in our wild trout populations and evaluate the effects of climate/weather events such as droughts and floods. We also gain information about hellbenders in our streams.



Laurel Creek



Beaverdam Creek



It takes a big crew, sometimes 20 folks, to survey a large stream. Fortunately, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park fish crew joins us on the larger streams along with Erwin National Fish Hatchery, Trout Unlimited, Rocky Fork State Park, volunteers, and other Forest Service employees.



Rocky Fork



Hampton Creek



Brook Trout Habitat Study



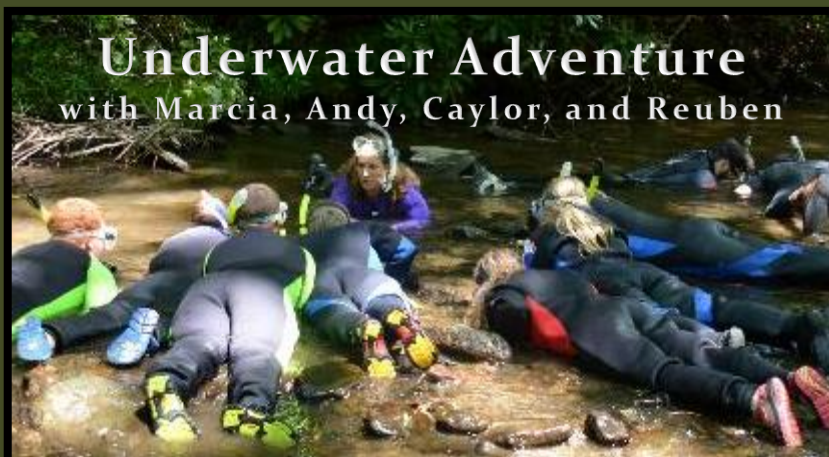
We finished up habitat, vegetation and fish surveys on the 32 streams used in the Brook Trout Habitat Suitability Index developed by Caylor for his Master's thesis. This index will help us select the best brook trout streams for restoration in the future. Thanks to all the many FS folks and volunteers that helped us out.



Animal Tracking with Joe and Reuben



Bear Aware with Amanda and Madron



Underwater Adventure with Marcia, Andy, Caylor, and Reuben



Xtreme Roan Adventures at Roan Mountain State Park was sponsored by the Friends of Roan Mountain, TN State Parks, ETSU, Girl Scouts, Southern Appalachians Highlands Conservancy, Bays Mtn. Park, AmeriCorps and volunteers. The 100+ kids and parents were able to choose from 25 different adventures that were offered.



Unicoi County Youth Outdoor Adventure



FS Scavenger Hunt



Unicoi High School
Face Painting



Fishing in Rock Creek Pool



NWTF & TWRA
Shooting Booths

About 100 kids and their families came out for trout fishing, turkey calling, a scavenger hunt, watershed education, face painting, bb shooting, archery, plus bear facts and prizes. Sponsors included: NWTF, TWRA, USFS, FWS, Unicoi Co. High School, RGS, Unicoi Fire Dept., and AmeriCorps.



Ruffed Grouse
Society

Amanda's Corner

Amanda spent the summer performing 112 campfire programs for campers across the North End. She worked at 14 events such as Unicoi Youth Outdoor Adventure, Apple Festival and South Holston Lake Cleanup. In between all of this she talked to 50 classes at local schools and 4 summer camps and put on educational programs with fun activities. In total she helped educate at least 4,400 people about the Cherokee National Forest and our resources. Way to go Amanda!



The Year's End Brings New Beginnings

We had a lot of excitement at the end of the Fiscal year with our team as their families grew.



Jonathan and his lovely new wife, Mercedes.



Reuben and Rachel are the proud parents of cute little Maeve.

Andy and Leah are the proud parents of sweet little Eli.

