



# SANDY CREEK NATURE CENTER

# The Hyla

VOL. 32, No. 2

Sandy Creek Nature Center is a facility of the Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department

Summer 2016

FIELD NOTES

## Take a Walk

Summer is here, and there is no better time for getting outside and reconnecting with nature. Take a hike, breathe fresh air, and escape from the stressful tasks of everyday life. Celebrate National Trails Day on June 4<sup>th</sup> by hiking and exploring trails in county, state, and national parks. Trails allow us access to the natural world that we might otherwise miss. A great deal of work goes into keeping our trails maintained, so be sure to thank local volunteers for all they do to preserve these paths.

## What's the Buzz?

As it warms up, you may begin to notice a low hum in the air that wasn't present during the colder months. That's the sound of the bumble bees returning for summer. Only queen bumble bees survive the winter through hibernation. When temperatures heat up, they emerge and begin establishing their new nests. So keep your ears open for the buzz of the new summer bees.



Continued on Page 2

## Postcards from Our Favorite Summer Places

By the Staff of SCNC

Summer is a great time to get out and explore new places. The staff at Sandy Creek Nature Center wanted to share a few locations that they enjoy visiting to inspire your summer trips.

"One of my favorite places to visit is not known to many people—Panthertown Valley, just outside of Cashiers, NC. Known as the "Yosemite of the East," this 6,000+ acre national forest service area is spectacular. Crossed by "v" shaped valleys, offering panoramic views, and sheer granite faces, Panthertown is an amazing site. There are six major waterfalls and many smaller cascades along creeks and waterways. More than 30 miles of trails provide access through the mountains ranging from simple to strenuous routes. It's a great place for dayhiking or backpacking - visit the Friends of Panthertown Valley's website for more details - <https://panthertown.org/>. From bears to rhododendron thickets, it's a beautiful place not too far from home. Be sure to get the map - the trail network is complex and a good guide is helpful."



-Randy Smith

"One of my favorite places to visit is an area on family land located in Banks County. This is land that is not open to the public, therefore it is just the right kind of place to escape to when I need solitude. I love this area because it's my private area where I can gather my thoughts and no one will disturb me. What I really love about the area is that I cross a creek and walk up the hill to this area where I overlook this wetland. And all around during the spring, it's covered with mayapples."



-Michelle Cash

Continued on Page 2



## SANDY CREEK Nature Center

205 Old Commerce Road  
Athens, GA 30607  
706-613-3615

www.athensclarkecounty.com/  
sandycreeknaturecenter  
Located off Commerce Road,  
441 North, 1/2 mile north of the  
Athens bypass, on the left

### Hours of Operation

8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
Tuesday ~ Saturday  
Building closed Sunday & Monday  
Trails open daily sunrise to sunset

### Nature Center Staff

Randy Smith, *Facility Supervisor*  
Kate Mowbray, *Naturalist*  
Michelle Cash, *Naturalist*  
Carmen Champagne, *Program Leader*  
Rhonda Smith, *Recreation Assistant*  
Breanna Walker, *Intern*  
David Subers, *Intern*  
Connor White, *Park Assistant*

### Sandy Creek Nature Center Inc.

The Board of Directors meets on the  
first Monday of each month  
(except holidays).

The public is welcome.

For more information about  
SCNC, Inc. contact:

Katie Eckardt, *Assistant to the Board*  
scncinc@gmail.com

To submit contributions  
to the Hyla, contact:

Kate Mowbray at  
kate.mowbray@athensclarkecounty.com

The Hyla is a quarterly publication of Sandy  
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Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services  
Department. Issues are mailed to all Nature  
Center members and are available to visitors.



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## Favorite Places....

continued from Page 1

"I have some great memories of my time at Blood Mountain. It is the highest peak on the Georgia section of the Appalachian Trail and can also be accessed from a trail at Vogel State Park. There is a famous stone shelter on top of the mountain that is neat to visit between the Creek and Cherokee Native American tribes, which occurred nearby at Slaughter Gap. The name of the tallest peak in the area was named Blood Mountain to commemorate the sad event!"



-David Subers

Continued on Page 3

"A bit further afield, the Green Swamp Preserve in coastal North Carolina is one of the most memorable sites I've ever visited. The preserve is managed by the Nature Conservancy and encompasses over 16,000 acres near Wilmington. Fox squirrels, alligators, and several rare birds may be seen here, but the Green Swamp is best known for its unusual flora. At least 14 different species of carnivorous plants grow here, including Venus flytraps, pitcher plants, and sundews. Various types of orchids can also be found within the preserve. Several years ago, I had the opportunity to spend a June day at this location; it was breathtaking, with many of the carnivorous plants in bloom. Should you ever find yourself in the area, it's certainly worth your time!"



-Carmen Champagne

FIELD NOTES cont. from page 1

### Berry Delicious

As the season heats up, be on the lookout for some of the sweet fruits of summer. Georgia is home to many native fruit-bearing plants including blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, and muscadines. Keep an eye out for wild blackberries from June to August and wild muscadine grapes from August to September. You can use these berries to make everything from jams to pies. Yum!



## Favorite Places....

continued from Page 2

"When summer turns up the heat and humidity, I try to seek refuge in places that are cooler. Growing up, my family would often take a Sunday drive up to the mountains of the Carolinas. As we would drive up the steeper elevations, winding back and forth, we could feel the temperature drop as our ears began to pop. We would seek out sites with waterfalls to further cool us. Each summer, I was able to attend one week of Girl Scout camp. On the camp's beautiful grounds was a waterfall. The joy of walking up the creek and ending underneath the flow of the falls is one that I still carry today. When it is safe, I always take off my shoes and walk the creek up to the bottom of the falls I'm visiting. There are many beautiful waterfalls to choose from that are a short drive from Athens. When summer's heat becomes unbearable, jump in the car and drive a short way to feel the cooling effect of water rushing over the falls."

-Kate Mowbray



"One of my favorite places to visit in Georgia during the summer is the island of the wild horses, also known as Cumberland Island. I first went to the island when I was eighteen, and I've gone back almost every summer since. It's a place of not only great history, but also one of wild, untamed beauty. Feral horses roam the sand dunes and old estate grounds, and sea turtles come to nest on the pristine beaches. It reminds me of a world that used to exist, one without phones and cars, and all of our other everyday distractions. Although

the island can only be accessed by boat in a town approximately five hours from Athens, it is well worth the journey."

-Breanna Walker



## "I've Been Working on the Railroad..."

This spring, the nature center hosted a garden train display. The display was set up by Dr. Maurice Snook. In preparation, he spent countless hours setting up track and bringing materials from home to make it look like a miniature railroad town. There were four sets of tracks set up with a variety of displayed buildings, people and a waterwheel. The trains ran for two weekends in a row due to their popularity. The garden train set-up was in conjunction with our Outdoor Hobby Day event. In addition to the set-up of the trains, Dr. Snook donated 85 hand cut wooden trains and all of their parts for families to assemble. The staff would like to say thank you to Dr. Snook for sharing his hobby of garden trains and for making such a memorable experience for our visitors.



# Summer Fruits

Circle the fruits that are wild and edible!

# Sandy's Kids Page



Elderberry



Black Cherry



Strawberry

Blueberry



Mulberry



Blackberry



Muscadine

(Answer:  
They are all edible!)

## And here is some summer humor for kids!

What did the pig say on a hot summer day?  
**I'm bacon!**



What do you call a cat at the beach?  
**Sandy claws!**

When do you go at red and stop at green?  
**When you're eating a watermelon!**



What does a frog eat in the summer?  
**Hopsicles!**

What is a tornado's favorite game to play?  
**Twister!**

What did one tide pool say to the other tide pool?  
**Show me your mussels!**

# Sandy Creek Nature Center Program Guide

# Summer 2016

Summer is a very busy time around the Nature Center. In addition to our regular Day Camp, which runs Monday-Friday, June 6 - July 22, 9 am - 4 pm, we have a very popular "Summer Explorers" series for children ages 4 - 6. These programs are already full with waiting lists, but please come by and explore Sandy Creek Nature Center this summer whenever you can!

.....

## ☀ VOLUNTEER TRAINING ☀

.....

### Trail Guide Training

Do you love hiking and sharing your love of nature? Trail Guiding may be a great way for you to do both! Trail Guides are volunteers that lead hikes for school aged children Tuesday-Friday mornings during the school year. Attend one day of training for the basics and then sign up to observe other Trail Guides in action.

**Please call to register.**

- Ages: Adults
- Dates: August 23, 24, 26
- Time: 9:00-Noon
- Fee: Free

### New Volunteer Orientation

Would you like to learn more about the volunteer opportunities at Sandy Creek Nature Center? This orientation will cover the variety of volunteer jobs we have and what they require.

**Please call to register.**

- Ages: 13 years and older
- Date: August 27
- Time: 10-11am
- Fee: free



### NATURE CENTER HOURS:

Tuesday -Saturday  
8:30 am - 5:30 pm

Trails are open every day from sunrise to sunset.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

Call 706 613-3615 x 0 for more information.

Register on-line at [www.athensclarkecounty.com/leisure](http://www.athensclarkecounty.com/leisure)

Please preregister no later than 1 day in advance for **ALL** programs unless otherwise noted.

Need-based scholarships are available for Athens-Clarke County residents under age 18.

See department policy for refunds and cancellations.

\*SCNC Members receive a 10% discount on these programs.

## Snake Day

**Saturday,  
June 4**

Details on Page 7!



## Babies & Beasties Series

Join us for a class structured for toddlers and their parents to learn about the world around them through hands-on activities, hikes and crafts.

**Ages:** 18 months to 2 years, with accompanying adult.

**Dates:** Thursdays, August 4, 11, 18, 25

**Time:** 10:00 - 10:45 am

**Fee:** \$12/ACC resident;  
\$18/Non-resident;  
10% off for SCNC members

**Please pre-register.**

## All Ages:

### Critter Tales

Listen to a story about nature, and then we'll bring it to life by visiting an animal or going outdoors for an activity. A different tale is read each month.

**Ages:** For families

**Dates:** Saturdays, June 11, July 9, August 13

**Time:** 2:30 - 3:00 pm

**Fee:** Free



### Family Fishing

Come out and enjoy fun family fishing in our hidden Claypit Pond. We provide bait, cane fishing poles, and tips.

**Ages:** For families (children under 13 must be accompanied by an adult).

**Date:** Friday, June 17

**Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 pm

**Fee:** \$7/ACC resident family,  
\$10.50/Non-resident family,  
per program.

**Pre-registration is required.**

### Naturalist's Walk

Join us for a walk around the property to see what's happening this summer! Bring your camera and/or binoculars.

**Ages:** All ages

**Dates:** Saturdays, June 18, July 16, August 20

**Time:** 10:00 - 11:00 am

**Fee:** Free

### Nature's Trading Post

The trading post is open! Trade one or two objects you have found in nature for points or other natural objects in our collection.

**Ages:** All ages (children under 13 with adult)

**Dates:** Saturdays, June 18, July 16, August 20

**Time:** 11:00 am - Noon

**Fee:** Free

## Journey through the Stars

Join us for our planetarium program in the Sky Center. We will journey through the night sky, exploring the great beyond. Each theme will explore a different aspect of astronomy.

**Ages:** Families (children 5 years and up, please!)

### "Spica and Virgo the Maiden"

Join us for a journey to Spica. Discover the tricks to finding Spica, hear the stories of Virgo the Maiden, and get a taste of summer constellation stories.

**Dates:** Saturday, June 11

**Time:** 10:00 - 11:00 am

### "The Man in the Moon"

Can you see the man in the moon? Discover the unique features of Earth's moon. See the phases and create phases of our own.

**Dates:** Saturday, July 9

**Time:** 10:00 - 11:00 am

### "What is Special About Our Solar System?"

Get up close with our planets, see our sun like never before and discover why our solar system is full of adventure. If the weather cooperates we will set up a telescope with a solar filter to see sun spots.

**Dates:** Saturday, August 13

**Time:** 10:00 - 11:00 am

### FOR ALL PLANETARIUM PROGRAMS:

**Fee:** \$7/ACC resident family,  
\$10.50/Non-resident family.

**Pre-registration required.**

# SNAKE DAY!

**Snakes get a bad rap. Come find out if snakes are really guilty of common accusations.**

Snakes have lots of vicious stories associated with them and their behaviors. These cold-blooded creatures are frequently judged and don't have the chance to defend themselves. This year, the Snake Day theme is "Snakes on Trial." Experts will be on hand to defend snakes and help people understand their importance to the environment.



Families can spend the day seeing live snakes, playing games, solving mysteries and participating in other fun activities. Kona Ice will be here selling cool treats, while Smitty's Family Restaurant will sell barbeque sandwiches, chips, and drinks. For more details, check out Facebook or our website.



**Ages:** All ages

**Date:** June 4

**Time:** Noon - 4:00 pm

**Fee:** \$3/ACC Residents, \$5/Non-ACC Residents; Children under age 3 are free.



## Celebrate Mud Day

Come play in the mud with us! Appreciate all the fun that mud has to offer. Dress to get muddy! Drop in for a few minutes or play the entire time.

**Ages:** Anyone that likes to play in the mud

**Date:** Saturday, June 25

**Time:** 1:00 - 4:00 pm

**Fee:** Free

## Family Program "Fireflies"

Enjoy a night hike through the woods while searching for the fireflies lighting up the trails. Make a firefly craft to take home.

**Ages:** For Families (children 4 years and up, please!)

**Date:** Thursday, June 30th

**Time:** 7:30 - 9:00 pm

**Fee:** \$7/ACC resident family, \$10.50/Non-resident family. **Pre-registration is required.**

## Who Let the Dogs Out...at Sandy Creek Nature Center

Bring your four-legged friend and enjoy the company of other dog lovers while hiking a trail at the nature center. Staff will guide the walk while also explaining the importance of dog etiquette while on the trails.

**Ages:** All ages of humans and dogs

**Date:** Wednesday, August 31

**Time:** 4:00 - 5:30 pm

**Fee:** Free



### FOR FAMILY PROGRAMS

Resident and non-resident fee is PER FAMILY.

Register online for one person in the family and include the number of participants when prompted.

# A Native Superfood

By David Subers, SCNC Intern

Blueberry picking is a favorite summer pastime for many people. Georgia actually has one of the longest growing seasons for blueberries, lasting from mid-April all the way into July. What I find truly interesting is the high prevalence and diversity of wild blueberry species right here in Athens. Blueberry bushes will only have fruit present in the summer, and different species produce fruit at different time periods. Since most people recognize them only by the fruit, blueberry bushes are often overlooked unless seen at the right time.

There are sixteen different species of wild blueberry that are native to our state, at least 5 of which can be found growing here in Athens-Clarke County. Elliott's blueberry and sparkleberry are two common species that we often see on the property here at the Nature Center; the latter produces berries that, while not poisonous, are fairly unpalatable. Most local blueberry species are less than ten feet tall, and can be readily identified by looking at their twigs, bark, and leaves. Look for green colored twigs, reddish or grayish-brown "shreddy" bark, and small elliptical-shaped leaves. These ID features are not infallible, but should help if you want to seek out some wild blueberry plants.

Blueberries have long been an important source of food for humans and wildlife alike. Native Americans especially valued the blueberry for its nourishment and medicinal properties as a relaxant during childbirth. A huge slew of songbirds and other bird species, as well as a number of mammals, rely on blueberries as a food source during the summer. Black bears have been known to travel up to 15 miles in a day in search of a blueberry patch and will often eat diets almost entirely of blueberries when they are ripe. You can grow blueberries right in your own yard. There are several highbush blueberry cultivars that will grow well, but you may want to give them their own plot. Blueberries thrive in acidic soils, a characteristic that most plants do not share. Alternatively, go support a local farm and pick your own blueberries!



## Blueberry Buttermilk Ice Cream

(from [acalculatedwhisk.com](http://acalculatedwhisk.com))

### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups lowfat buttermilk, divided
- 2 teaspoons gelatin
- 1/4 cup raw honey
- 2 cups frozen blueberries (do not defrost)
- 2/3 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract (or lemon liqueur, such as limoncello)
- Pinch of sea salt

### Directions:

- Place 1/2 cup of the buttermilk in a small saucepan and sprinkle the gelatin on top. Let the gelatin bloom for 5 minutes, until the surface of the milk appears wrinkled. Set the heat to low and warm the buttermilk, stirring frequently, just until the gelatin dissolves (do not allow the mixture to come to a simmer). Turn off the heat and whisk in the honey until smooth.
- Pour the buttermilk and honey mixture into the bowl of a food processor or blender. Add the rest of the buttermilk and all the remaining ingredients and process until smooth.
- Transfer the ice cream base to a bowl and freeze for 30 minutes or refrigerate for 2 hours to make sure it's nice and cold. Process in an ice cream maker, transfer to a chilled freezer-safe container, and freeze for 2 hours before scooping and serving. If the ice cream has been frozen much longer than that, let it thaw for about 10 minutes before digging in.



ACC Leisure Services Department

**ONLINE REGISTRATION**  
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REGISTRATION TAKES PLACE AT

[www.athensclarkecounty.com/leisure](http://www.athensclarkecounty.com/leisure)




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SANDY CREEK  
NATURE CENTER  
PROGRAMS ONLINE!

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# Sandy Creek Nature Center Calendar of Events

## June 2016

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
SUNDAY			2 	3	4 <b>SNAKE DAY!</b> Noon - 4 pm
MONDAY	7 Sandy Creek Day Camp begins, Monday, June 6!	8 <b>Summer Explorers - "What if I had..."</b>	9	10	11 Critter Tales, 2:30 pm Journey Through the Stars, "Spica and Virgo the Maiden," 10 - 11 am
	14 	15	16	17 Family Fishing, 6 - 7:30 pm	18 Naturalists Walk, 10 - 11 am Nature's Trading Post, 11 am - noon
	21 	22 <b>Summer Explorers - "Dirt Doesn't Hurt"</b>	23	24	25 Celebrate Mud Day!, 1 - 4 pm
	28	29	30 Family Program - "Fireflies," 7:30 - 9 pm		

## July 2016

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
SUNDAY				1	2
MONDAY	5 	6 <b>Summer Explorers - "I spy with my little eye.."</b>	7	8	9 Journey Through the Stars, "The Man in the Moon," 10 - 11 am Critter Tales, 2:30 pm
	12	13	14	15	16 Naturalists Walk, 10 - 11 am Nature's Trading Post, 11 am - noon
	19	20 <b>Summer Explorers - "Make a Splash!"</b>	21	22	23 
	26	27	28	29	30

# August 2016

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
SUNDAY	2	3	4 Babies & Beasties, 10 - 10:45 am	5	6
MONDAY	9	10	11 Babies & Beasties, 10 - 10:45 am	12	13 Journey Through the Stars: "What is Special About Our Solar System?," 10 - 11 am Critter Tales, 2:30 pm
	16	17	18 Babies & Beasties, 10 - 10:45 am	19	20 Naturalists Walk, 10 - 11 am Nature's Trading Post, 11 am - noon
	23 Trail Guide Training, 9 am - noon	24 Trail Guide Training, 9 am - noon	25 Babies & Beasties, 10 - 10:45 am	26 Trail Guide Training, 9 am - noon	New Volunteer Orientation, 10 - 11 am 
	30	31 Who Let the Dogs Out?, 4 - 5:30 pm			

## You've Got to Lubber!

Sandy Creek Nature Center is home to many wild plants and animals, but there's a local species you're unlikely to spot on the property—the Eastern Lubber Grasshopper, *Romalea microptera*. These large grasshoppers can grow to three inches long. They have a narrow distribution in Athens and tend to show up in residential neighborhoods, especially areas near Five Points and Prince Ave. The word lubber is derived from a Middle English term for “a clumsy or lazy person.” They are slow, unable to fly, and cannot even jump particularly well. Instead of relying on mobility for protection, lubbers make use of chemical defenses.

These grasshoppers hatch in the spring, emerging from soil where their eggs were deposited. Young lubbers are boldly colored, black or dark red with yellow-orange stripes. Adult coloration is usually more yellow, but at all stages, this color palette is intended to serve

as a warning to predators. Chemical compounds in the grasshopper's body can sicken mammals and some birds. To reinforce its intimidating appearance, a lubber under threat may hiss, spread its wings, regurgitate, or pro-



duce a foul-smelling fluid from the area around its hind legs. Juveniles will also cluster together in groups, taking advantage of safety in numbers.

Lubbers continue to eat and grow throughout the spring and summer,

*By Carmen Champagne, Program Leader*

sometimes bringing them into conflict with gardeners. They consume a wide variety of vegetation, from weeds to agricultural crops to prized landscape plants. Keep in mind that despite appearances, lubber grasshoppers are harmless to humans and only problematic to animals if they are ingested. Also, despite tall tales that have been spun about them over the years (including one I've heard about their being an escaped genetic experiment in which UGA scientists sought to create a red-and-black grasshopper,) they are a natural part of our ecosystem. If possible, it's best to leave them unharmed. Should you consider it necessary to remove them, simply picking them off your plants is simple and effective; insecticides should not be used. It is also said that they make excellent fishing bait! Overall, should you encounter one, try to appreciate a relatively rare encounter with one of the south's most distinctive insects.

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Sandy Creek Nature Center, Inc. is the nonprofit organization which founded the Nature Center in 1973. Memberships help provide funding for educational programs and capital improvements.

You may renew your membership here, or go to [athensclarkecounty.com/sandycreeknaturecenter](http://athensclarkecounty.com/sandycreeknaturecenter) and renew online.

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**Thank you for your contribution.**



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# The Hyla

A Quarterly Newsletter of Sandy Creek Nature Center

## Check it out!

While visiting the nature center this summer, take advantage of our free materials to check out and use while hiking or playing indoors. Ask at the front desk about which items you would like to check out; and leave something like a license or keys to remind you to bring them back. All packs contain a checklist so you can make sure all the parts are returned. Enjoy!



### Binoculars

From the youngest users to the oldest, we have a pair of binoculars that will work great for you.



### Trail Packs

Choose from a variety of topics including insects, birds, tracks and scat. Each pack contains materials for exploring outdoors.

### Tractors and Trucks Play Packs

What kid doesn't love to play with toy vehicles? Starting this summer, you can check out an agriculture play pack that includes toy tractors along with a farm rug or a forestry tools play pack. These packs can be played with in the planetarium room when programs are not happening.

