

Nature Mixed In

Quarterly News from Elachee Nature Science Center • February 2022

Message from Sarah Bell, Elachee President/CEO

Increasing Accessibility

Enhancing the Elachee Visitor Experience

Although 2022 certainly did not start the way we might have anticipated, winter is here and we at Elachee are excited about the wonderful times that lie ahead!

As you know, **our mission is to promote environmental understanding through education and conservation.** We continue to do that in so many ways, even in the midst of these uncertain times – thanks to supporters like you!

Our school field trips have returned, and our campus is bustling and filled with the excited sounds of our local children. Elachee's onsite school, Elachee Nature Academy, continues to be a haven for families who want their young children to experience an alternative to the traditional classroom and spend the majority of their day in nature. Camp Elachee had a record year in 2021. For our 2022 camp season, we are thrilled to have new funding sources to ensure increased accessibility to this amazing summer resource for our community.

The Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve ecology is thriving, thanks in no small part to our dedicated volunteer Trail Crew who keep the hiking trails in this protected urban forest accessible for our visiting public to enjoy. We are also immensely grateful for the work of our amazing Board of Trustees, volunteers and staff.

As we keep looking ahead, the Elachee team continues to focus on providing the environmental education our community seeks. We are excited to be rolling out innovative Discovery Saturday programming, an expanded Trillium Trek Trail Run in April, a Spring Master Naturalist series, the return of in-person Science Nights (with continued virtual options, as well), along with plans for new exhibits to help support your experience here at Elachee. Visit www.elachee.org for program details.

I hope with all of these happenings, you might see a way that you would like to support our work. Elachee was created by a community of people who loved nature and all it has to offer, and we hope that you will help us continue that legacy by joining (or rejoining) our circle of friends.

Whether you see yourself volunteering, participating in ecology programs, supporting us through your philanthropic efforts, or simply stopping by for a chat to help us understand how to create an Elachee experience tailored to your needs, I hope that you will visit and spend some time with us soon. Be well!



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INSERT

Elachee 2021 Donor Honor Roll

Elachee Happenings, Programs and Events

Meet Elachee's 2022 Annual Sponsors

\$50,000 ANNUAL INVESTMENT
PRESENTING PLATINUM SPONSOR



NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL

\$15,000 ANNUAL INVESTMENT
SILVER PROGRAMS HOST SPONSOR



\$10,000 ANNUAL INVESTMENT
BRONZE ANIMAL EXHIBIT SPONSORS



\$5,000 ANNUAL INVESTMENT
COPPER ANNUAL SPONSORS



Select a Seasonal Event Sponsorship to gain visibility for your business!

INVESTMENT LEVELS: elachee.org/support

Citizen Scientists and Counting Birds

Flock to Elachee for Great Backyard Bird Count Festivities!

Which wildlife are we most likely to see, hear and experience each day? **BIRDS!** Birders of every age, skill level and background are invited to join us at Elachee and along the Chicopee Woods Hiking Trails, **February 18-21, 2022**, to observe birds, collect bird data and most of all, enjoy being in nature!

Saturday, February 19 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., visit Elachee for Great Backyard Bird Count Festivities! Kick off the day with an adult birding hike on Elachee's

Lake Loop trail with local expert Peter Gordon, then head to the Nature Center for family-friendly birding experiences.

Activities will include a live birds of prey showcase, crafts, games, owl pellet dissection, other challenges and live animal showcases. We welcome Frozen Frenzee, Georgia Audubon, Hall County Library, University of North Georgia and Blue Ridge Raptors. Admission is \$10 per person, \$5 per member (ages 2 and up). **FIND DETAILS:** elachee.org/events

Welcome Feathered Friends to Your Yard

6 MUST DO's



Plant Native. Remove Invasives. Select Georgia-native or southeastern native plants, trees and shrubs that offer year-round food sources to birds and insects. Many invasive plant species out-compete native species birds and insects favor that also make up their diets. Eliminating invasives will help native species thrive.

Provide Food and Water Sources Bird feeders provide excellent supplemental food sources for birds during times of scarcity (winter) and fresh water sources provide *you* with excellent bird watching opportunities! Offer multiple seed options, as varying species feed on different types.

Bird Houses and Nesting Boxes Install various sizes of nest boxes from which different species may choose. Be sure the ones you choose have drainage and ventilation holes. Remember to clean out the box after each clutch has fledged.

Brush Piles and Dead Trees

Brush piles with varying branch sizes and yard debris create a valuable habitat for roosting and nesting birds. Leaving dead trees alone (if safe) will harbor many wildlife species, including birds like woodpeckers and owls, providing a unique and exciting opportunity to observe this wildlife.

Eliminate Pesticide/Herbicide Use

Insects are the primary food source for many bird species, specifically juvenile birds, providing them with necessary proteins and fats. Having an insect-free yard will likely result in little to no insect-eating birds visiting your backyard.

Nest Balls

Creating and hanging balls of material near a feeder or nest box is an easy and fun DIY project that to attract birds to your yard. Birds can pull items out of the ball to use as supplemental material for building their nests!

Construct nest balls using:

- Grapevine balls (*find at craft stores*)
- Yard debris like pine straw, pine needles and dead leaves
- Pet fur (*collected after brushing*)
- Natural fibers such as cotton balls, wool, jute or down feathers from a coat or pillow
- Fabrics such as string/twine, ribbon, yarn or lace
- Dryer lint

NOTE: Do not use if you use fabric softener in the wash or dryer sheets, as this lint may contain chemicals harmful to birds.

Here and There



A Peaceful Haven

Exploring in nature will invigorate the mind *and* body – a ‘break’ students need. A visit to meet Elachee's resident animal ambassadors (the raptor Chewy the Owl, reptiles, amphibians and more) also inspires curiosity in our young guests.

In December, Chewy greeted many 2nd and 3rd Graders in his regal and nonchalant way. For most of these children, this was their first time seeing a Great Horned Owl in real life. We love sharing these experiences with students and hope memorable nature encounters motivate them to learn more about the natural world.

Bringing Nature to You

When your group cannot visit the Nature Center in person, ask Elachee to bring programming to you! Our outreaches have become an increasingly popular children's' and adult programming option for schools and other community groups when logistical challenges or other difficulties prevent groups from coming to Elachee. An environmental education outreach can be a fabulous way to educate nature lovers of every age.

This spring our team will begin taking popular Elachee programs into senior living and active adult communities throughout the area. Covering topics such as animal habitats and adaptations, Lake Lanier and the Cherokee, outreaches allow us to faithfully fulfill the Elachee mission by teaching Earth stewards any time of year.

SCHEDULE A PROGRAM: www.elachee.org

Hiking for Health 150-Mile Chicopee Challenge

Record the miles you hike along the Chicopee Woods Hiking Trails in 2022. Earn a custom graphic t-shirt when you reach your 150-mile goal.

GET HIKING LOG @ <https://bit.ly/3gBmdlz>



Elachee Volunteer Trail Crew [pictured L-R]: Johnny Garner, David Scoby, David Gaddy, Terry Park, Mike McCormac, Joe Meadows and Hugh McKinney.

The Forgotten Side of Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve

March 2022 Opening for the New 4.2-Mile Chicopee Backcountry Trail

Elachee asked for community input and you answered! Now, the first step in a multi-phase, enhanced visitor experience is nearly ready.

Outside the 8-mile pedestrian hiking trail system in the Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve lies untouched acreage, land that people have not traveled for decades. Thanks to devoted volunteers and Elachee staff, hikers will soon be able to access and explore the Chicopee Woods' backcountry.

Elachee's Volunteer Trail Crew has been hard at work carving a passage through the 'backcountry' area of this pristine 1,440-acre woodland, creating a new 4.22-mile trail that ties to existing hiking trails. This 50-percent addition to the Chicopee Woods Hiking Trail system takes it from eight miles to just over 12.

The Chicopee Backcountry Trail is slated to open for public access on March 5, 2022. Adventure and challenge describe this newest hiking trail. It comes with a warning, though: this trail is not for the faint of heart or unsteady of foot! To orient hikers to the trail's challenging terrain, Trail Crew members and Elachee staff will host guided hikes on opening day (by reservation only).

"The Chicopee Backcountry Trail will be an ideal training ground for backwoods hiking, for those preparing to hike the Appalachian Trail and/or other physically demanding terrains," shares Kristin Love, Director of Natural Resources and Conservation at Elachee. "This 'difficult terrain' training option is one of the closest to Atlanta other than driving to Dahlenega or Helen."

The Trail Crew extensively explored the Chicopee Woods backcountry before determining the path the trail would take through the Nature Preserve. This skilled and dedicated crew has logged

scores of volunteer hours choosing where to flag, then reflag, only to change directions and reflag again. Visiting hikers will benefit from the Trail Crew's adventures.

During this arduous project, the Trail Crew installed stairs, cleared paths by blowing leaves, brush eating, swing blading, lopping, blazing – and will lop even more briar patches before this initial job is done. In spite of their exhaustion, these intrepid and VERY fit Elachee faithful are in high spirits as the finish line draws near.

To a person, this monumental project has been a labor of love. It goes even further in that it is also bringing to fruition the next iteration in what has been a long-held vision for this land.

The Trail Crew's efforts are guided by the original intent of how this protected land (land donated by the Johnson & Johnson Company) would be used, as envisioned by General Robert Wood Johnson II. "The express purpose of the gift [land] was to allow the people of Hall County to have park and recreational lands available to them in a quantity that would meet present and future needs."

Backcountry hikers may confidently travel the Chicopee Backcountry Trail, guided by marked blazes. Steep ridges are outlined with necessary switchbacks, to prevent erosion and soil runoff into the Oconee Watershed. Creek crossings, accomplished only by leapfrogging over placed rocks and logs, will undoubtedly end in a few wet pant legs.

The Chicopee Woods Hiking Trails are open daily to the public during park hours, 7 a.m. to sunset. All vehicles are subject to a daily Chicopee Woods Area Park Commission parking fee.

HIKING TRAIL TIPS: www.elachee.org



CAMP ELACHEE 2022

PRESENTED BY NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL



REGISTER ONLINE
elachee.org/camp-elachee

SPRING BREAK DAY CAMP

Current Kindergarten to 5th Grade

April 4-8, 2022

8 a.m. to 3 p.m., M-F

NON-MEMBER FEE

\$200

ELACHEE MEMBER FEE

\$180

SUMMER DAY CAMPS

WEEKLY THEMES

PRE-K CAMPS
8 a.m. to Noon
Age 3 or 4
Independent Toilet Skills

ELEMENTARY CAMPS
8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Rising Kindergarten to 6th Grade

WEEK 1: May 31-June 3, 2022 4-Day Camp

Forest Forensics

WEEK 2: June 6-10, 2022

Flying High

WEEK 3: June 13-17, 2022

Expedition Explorer

WEEK 4: June 20-24, 2022

Space Bound

WEEK 5: June 27-July 1, 2022

Water Wonders

WEEK 6: July 5-8, 2022 4-Day Camp

Ancient Elachee

WEEK 7: July 11-15, 2022

Green and Growing

WEEK 8: July 18-22, 2022

Camp Rewind

COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING (CIT)

Leadership Program for High School Students

FEE: \$100 PER CIT for each 2-week commitment

NOW ACCEPTING INQUIRIES: sam@elachee.org

FEES ▶

PER CAMPER, PER CAMP WEEK

PRE-K NON-MEMBER FEE

\$175

ELEMENTARY NON-MEMBER FEE

\$200

PRE-K ELACHEE MEMBER FEE

\$155

ELEMENTARY ELACHEE MEMBER FEE

\$180

▶ ▶ **FINANCIAL AID:** Call 770-535-1976 for Details ◀ ◀

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION

Register your camper(s) February 1-28, 2022 for an additional 10% discount!



Recycle and Repurpose

Volunteers Give New Life to Old Banners

Where do old Elachee marketing banners go to die? They live on, thanks to the ingenuity of Elachee Volunteers Connie Barrow and Deborah Ingram.

Connie felt something should be done with these banners; the fabric was in good condition. She found a tote bag pattern and recruited Deborah to help take the idea from concept to finished product!

Each handcrafted tote has a unique design. Buy a Recycled Elachee Tote Bag, while supplies last, for \$6.00* each. These are available at the Elachee Nature Shop weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., or during a Discovery Saturday. *plus applicable sales tax and/or shipping

CALL FOR DETAILS: 770-535-1976

Saturday Morning

April 23, 2022

Trillium Trek

TRAIL RUN & WALK

Half-Marathon and 5K Run/Walk along the Chicopee Woods Hiking Trails

RACE REGISTRATION PORTAL

elachee.org/trillium-trek



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