

Acorn to Oak

February 2023: View from the Canopy

Quarterly News from Elachee Nature Science Center

New “Bridge to Nature” for Elachee Dr.

Interstate 985 is looking different these days, as noticed by everyday commuters passing by Elachee’s Main Campus. The Georgia DOT determined that the existing “bridge to nature” connecting Elachee Drive to our campus requires replacement.

The existing Elachee Bridge over I-985 was constructed in 1967. The new bridge will be built to the north side of the existing bridge, with impressive enhancements including a pedestrian walkway and new beautification features that will welcome visitors to Gainesville.

As those of you who have visited us recently will know, December brought a focus on clearing the land and prepping for the new bridge. While seeing these trees removed was a tough sight for us all, we are incredibly thankful for the new bridge and the opportunity it brings to introduce thousands more visitors to the natural world here in Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve. Collaborations with the environmental engineers and project managers here on the ground have the goal of limiting ecological damage as much as possible during this necessary build.

Elachee is also working closely with one of the incredible partners who knows Chicopee Woods well, New Urban Forestry, to protect and encourage tree health and growth in prioritized areas within the preserve. This project involves certified arborists identifying at risk tree groups and treating the root sections with sucking-insect basal treatments, soil care and injections, phytophthora treatment, and more to support the trees that call Chicopee Woods and Elachee home.

For our visitors, we are so grateful for your patience during this time of disruption. GDOT has assured us that they will try to minimize disturbance as much as possible, but there will be times during which the existing Elachee bridge will be confined to one lane. However, your Bridge to Nature will never be outright closed due to this construction. Efforts are also underway to repair further damage, such as potholes, that will result from these large trucks and equipment, which will be addressed after the completion of the project.

Elachee will provide updates as the project progresses. We are incredibly excited about the ultimate goal for this new bridge, to bring more of our community back home to Chicopee Woods and Elachee Nature Science Center.



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Apr 29 ... TRILLIUM TREK TRAIL RUN

Sept 9 ... WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

Oct 21 ... FLIGHTS OF FANCY/ADULT CAMP

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DONOR PROFILE: Mike and Robbie McCormac

Their Living Legacy Started with Bird Seed

Some 33 years ago, Robbie McCormac frequently visited Elachee's office in downtown Gainesville where she bought bird seed. One visit, she saw a summer camp notice and registered her 5-year-old. Robbie's relationship with Elachee was sealed, as was Mike's!

Mike and Robbie relocated to Gainesville from Richmond, Virginia, in the mid-1980s, to begin his medical practice as she began her lifelong passion for volunteering. For decades, Robbie has been a stellar volunteer at Elachee; heading up semi-annual plant sales, serving on fundraising event steering committees, coordinating volunteer efforts for the ANCA National Conference, and leading other special projects at the Nature Center such as the resident animal adoption program, exhibit designs and more.

Wanting to be more purposeful in their charitable giving, the couple created the McCormac Family Foundation to embrace their focus on all things nature and gardening, science and children. Elachee and its visitors benefit from the McCormac's significant generosity. Today, Elachee visitors are treated to the *Mike and Robbie McCormac Pollinator Pass* interpretive exhibit that also features live honeybee hives. Additionally, as annual sponsors, their yearly investment supports operation of Elachee's live animal exhibits.

During the pandemic, Robbie's efforts as a CASA volunteer increased and she has had to scale back on her Elachee commitments. Subsequently, Mike retired as a practicing physician and joined Elachee's volunteer trail crew. He enjoys working to maintain the 12.24-mile hiking trail system he personally uses all the time. Mike helps keep trails clear and free of hazards, as well as enjoying the camaraderie of working with others on this team.

Both McCormacs wish for a balance between preserving the land and making access to it 'somewhat comfortable' to get out and explore it. "People cannot go without an outlet for stress. Access to Elachee and the Chicopee Woods can build you up for free," says Robbie.

When asked why Elachee's work is important, Robbie answers, "The interest of this place [Elachee and the Nature Preserve] is always changing." Mike and she both support Elachee's ongoing focus and concentrated efforts to inform the future, not just let it happen without direction. "If people don't understand now what they need to do [to preserve], natural spaces and ecology practices will fall by the wayside and cease to exist."

"You can't get it back once it's gone," Mike states and Robbie adds, "No one can appreciate something they cannot see. Make nature and the natural world important – important enough that current and future generations will experience it so they will gain insight to share with subsequent generations." VISIT elachee.org/support

Newest Elachee Trustees

Join the Elachee family in welcoming Bill Rhoads, Steven Smith and Brian Whalen to the leadership team. They join these Elachee Trustees: Brad Abernathy, Emily Bagwell, Phil Bonelli, Rick Boyd, Nick Bruner, Jason Everett, Lance Gardner, Anna Lloyd, Chris Romberg, Dixie Truelove, Kelvin Whisenhunt, Mandi Whiting and Trey Wood.

Bill Rhoads

Attorney-at-Law
Smith, Gilliam, Williams & Miles PA

"I'm excited to join the Elachee board because I love the mud. I love running on the trails and getting filthy. I want to help continue Elachee's goal of getting people outside and into nature to taste, smell, feel the outdoors. My long-term dreams for Elachee are to create endowments for teaching spots for both the Nature Academy and for the field trips. Everyone should know that Elachee is the best place to see giant snails in the woods!"



Steven Smith

Vice President Regional Campuses
University of North Georgia

"Elachee is a vital partner with UNG as it provides great opportunities for research and service learning for our students and faculty."



Brian Whalen

Registered Principal
Stribling-Whalen Financial Group

"I love to backpack and hike wherever I am. Since my business is in Gainesville and I live in downtown Flowery Branch, I have been an active user of the trails at Elachee for many years. My hope is that Elachee can serve as that same conduit for others to realize the benefits of getting outside like I have. My final wishes even read that I want a small gathering of those who wish to attend at Elachee to go on a hike."



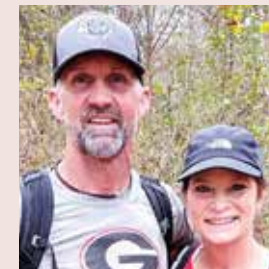
Trail Talk

"The backcountry is my new favorite trail. I've hiked it now three times; twice northbound and now southbound. It's like a different trail hiking it different directions. I like it because I can combine it with other 'internal' trails that I've hiked so many times. Honestly, there is nothing to dislike about the Chicopee Woods and all of the trails. We, in Gainesville and Hall County, are so blessed that we have Elachee." – Angie Moore



"We discovered Elachee just a few weeks ago and are working our way through the entire trail system. This past weekend we hiked the Chicopee Woods Backcountry trail. It's hard to find virgin forests to hike through this close to our home in Jefferson. The trail is very well blazed, providing a great variety of terrain and environments. We highly recommend it for all hikers."

– Sam and Lisa Stephenson



"I knew about Elachee, but I didn't know this trail system was here. I came out and fell in love with the place. It's so close to where I live and I've been coming for six years now. I can get out here and enjoy nature, and just 'be.' Every time I leave, I feel better than when I came. Whenever anything is bothering me, I come here to walk and clear my mind. I'm so thankful this place is here and that it's taken care of the way it is. I'm blessed beyond measure to be able to enjoy it."

– Barry Shoemaker



Find Balance in Nature

Georgia: Home of oaks and pines, over 1.7-million acres of public land, and positioned at the southern-most point of the Appalachian Trail. Yet residents of the *Peach State* face the same boundaries as continental counterparts when it comes to access and time spent in nature.

Saturday, April 21, 2023 join us to celebrate nature at **Elachee's Earth Day Festival**. In the meantime, get outside!

Find a Happier, Healthier Life through Nature



Work hard to make money.

memories of outdoor adventures.

Buy yourself a cup of coffee every day.

Annual Pass and reconnect with nature.

Spend the morning viewing social media.

taking a hike through the forest.

Do what you can to protect your privacy.

local woodlands.

Use free time to watch videos online.

make a difference in your community.

SOURCE: gofindoutdoors.org

Naturalist's Notebook

Being a Naturalist

Many years ago, I was leading a hike for a group of elementary students at Elachee. I introduced myself as a Naturalist. The teacher asked, "Mr. Don, will you explain to the students what a naturalist is and how a naturalist is different from a scientist?"

I responded, "A naturalist observes and often records what they experience in nature. A scientist develops a hypothesis, tests the hypothesis, and reports on either accepting or rejecting the hypothesis."



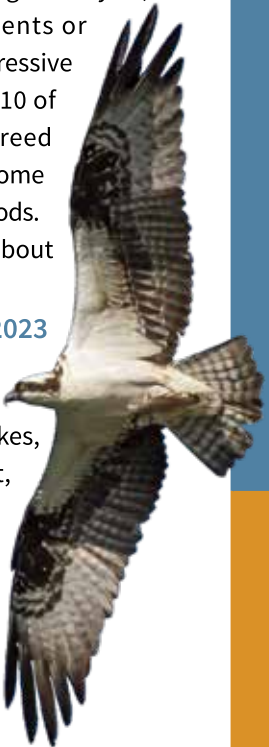
Winging It at Elachee

Over 340 distinct species of birds make their way through Georgia each year, either as year-round residents or migrants. In that impressive count, between 90-110 of those bird species breed and nest in Georgia, some found in Chicopee Woods. Ready to learn more about birds in our area?

Elachee February 2023 Birding Activities

Great Backyard Bird Festivities, Guided Hikes, Children's Art Contest, Photo Contest

LEARN MORE
elachee.org/events



We humans are born with a curiosity of the world around us and are fortunate to live in a complex and fascinating natural world. Some of us remain intrigued and excited by everything about the natural world from the day we become aware of it until the day we die.

Naturalists are lucky people in two respects. First, by enjoying every aspect of the surrounding world. Secondly, they can ply their pastime by watching birds in the Gainesville square, for example, or marveling in the splendor of a fall day in Chicopee Woods.

The great naturalists likely gained their appreciation of nature as children – ever fascinated by the natural world they encountered. My plan for the *Naturalist Notebook* series is to share things in the natural world, both big and small, that fascinate me. Hopefully, by doing so, it will help you to become a (or become a better) naturalist.

– Don Lane

Become a Member

Four Reasons to Join!

Memberships enable Elachee to provide facilities, hiking trails, ecology programming and services for you to enjoy! Choose the option that fits your lifestyle.

JOIN NOW



Membership Options ►	INDIVIDUAL EXPLORER	DUAL EXPLORER	FAMILY ADVENTURER	ELACHEE PATRON
<i>*Memberships are non-transferable, non-refundable and valid only for the named adult(s) on membership card.</i>				
Membership Benefits ▼				
Member Eligibility ADULTS = Ages 18+ CHILDREN = Ages 2-17	1 ADULT	2 ADULTS or 1 ADULT + 1 CHILD	2 ADULTS + 4 CHILDREN	2 ADULTS + 4 CHILDREN
1-YEAR Membership* Fee	\$75	\$125	\$200	\$500
FREE General Admission to Elachee	🌿	🌿	🌿	🌿
DISCOUNTED Program Fees and Admission <i>Select Elachee Happenings</i>	🌿	🌿	🌿	🌿
MEMBER-ONLY Advance Notification	🌿	🌿	🌿	🌿
Annual Parking Pass <i>Issued by the Chicopee Woods Area Park Commission</i>	1 PASS	2 PASSES	2 PASSES	2 PASSES
CAMP ELACHEE Member-only Early Registration			🌿	🌿
CAMP ELACHEE Registration Discount			10%	10%
GUEST PASSES <i>Single-use for FREE Elachee Admission or to select Elachee Happenings</i>			4 PASSES	8 PASSES
FREE or DISCOUNTED Admission to ANCA Member Nature Centers	🌿	🌿	🌿	🌿

elachee.org/ecosystem/#Membership



REGISTER

2023 Trillium Trek

HALF-MARATHON • 10K • 5K Run/Walk
RACE ALONG THE CHICOPEE WOODS HIKING TRAIL SYSTEM

Saturday, April 29, 2023

REGISTRATION CLOSES APRIL 19

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elachee.org/trillium-trek

Let's Socialize!



Follow Elachee. Connect with Us!

Your gift

helps Elachee promote environmental understanding through education and conservation.



Experience Elachee

DISCOVER: Nature Center Attractions

Elachee is open for admission Monday to Saturday. Check out our updates! Hike the Ed Dodd Loop and enjoy interpretive signage along this ecologically diverse trail. Find the purposeful play spaces on Geiger Trail and around the Nature Center. Explore the Discovery Room that undergoes a theme change each month! Admire the pollinator art exhibit, and more. elachee.org/attractions



LEARN: Public Programming

From adult and children's nature programs to family adventures, your trip to Elachee offers you the chance to discover, learn and play in and around the Nature Center!

elachee.org/events

PLAY: Chicopee Woods Hiking Trails

The 12.24-mile hiking trail system is open daily to the public. elachee.org/hiking-trails

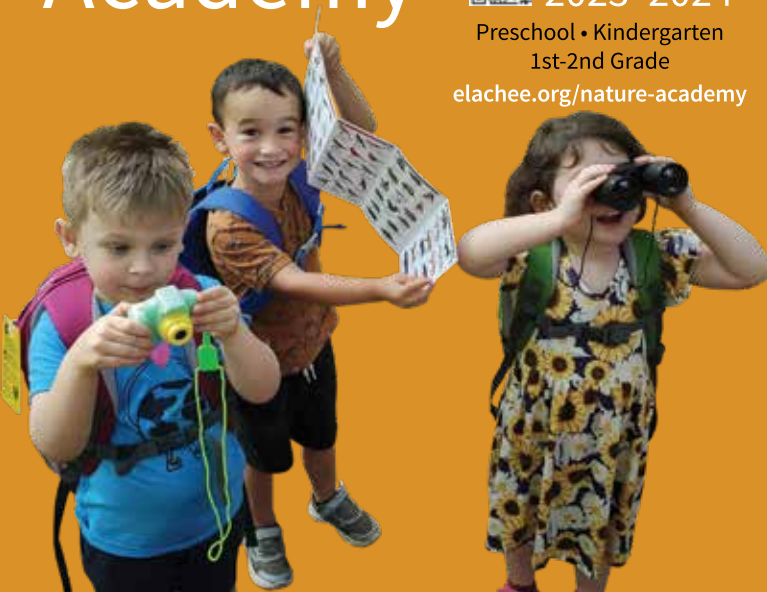
Elachee Nature Academy



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elachee.org/nature-academy



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Summer Day Camps

MAY 30 – JULY 21, 2023

elachee.org/camp-elachee

ELACHEE MEMBER Registration
Opens February 6



GENERAL Registration
Opens March 1

