



ROME-FLOYD ECO CENTER

ANNUAL REPORT

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A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Year after year, we are humbled by our community's continued support of the E.C.O. Center - thank you for trusting us to deliver quality natural resource education programs and events for over 10 years. Big things are happening right now! As we closed out 2023 and headed into the new year, we began our long-awaited but exciting renovation process. There will be some growing pains until the project is complete, but we promise that the end result will bring expanded opportunities to all citizens. Conservation leadership, and stewardship of natural resources remain at the forefront of our mission, and we are ready to expand our programs and events along with the building.

Ben Winkelman

BEN WINKELMAN

Director



TOTAL REACH

15,792

students & adults

engaged in natural resource and native wildlife education through

141

programs & events



PARTICIPANT TOTALS

6427

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

1879

EDU PROGRAMS & EVENTS

1570

OUTREACH EVENTS

5916

WALK-IN VISITORS



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

6427
students

The E.C.O. Center experienced a 29% increase in school program participants from 2022 to 2023! We had the opportunity to engage with all grade levels and types of school groups. Education is the core of what we do, and we strive to create memorable and experiential opportunities that suit all ages and abilities. The E.C.O. Center continues to develop new curriculum and maintain its reputation for quality school programs that meet both student & teacher expectations.



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS & EVENTS



2314
students & adults

In addition to school programs, the E.C.O. Center provides educational opportunities for citizens and visitors. These include our Little Critters preschool program, Student Exploration Days, archery, summer camps, library events, club and association meetings, and so much more. A variety of programs and events leads us to reach a diversity of populations and interests.



OUTREACH EVENTS



1570
students & adults

The E.C.O. Center enjoys being part of and supporting community events as we are able. While we may not teach specific lessons at these events, it affords us the opportunity to engage in conversations about what we do. By participating in larger outreach events, we can connect with a broader audience and share our passion for wildlife and natural resource education and conservation. This year we had the privilege to be part of Ducks Unlimited Greenwings, Johnson Elementary Greenfest, Bee Fest, the Coosa Valley Fair, and Cartersville Elementary Spooky Science Night. We love when someone visits the Center and says they remember us from one of these events!



3RD GRADE GRANT

766
students



The International Paper Foundation again graciously awarded the E.C.O. Center a \$3500 grant to cover the program fees for all 3rd graders in the city and county school systems. Ten of the twelve elementary schools participated in the opportunity in the spring of 2023, totaling 766 3rd grade students. The E.C.O. Center helped connect classroom learning with hands-on experiences as students explored plants, wildlife, and habitats of the geographic regions of Georgia at this grade-level. Utilizing the Center's live animal exhibits and wetlands demonstration area, students could see first-hand the adaptations of wildlife that allows them to survive in their habitat.



RENOVATIONS



Fall 2024
expected completion

Thanks to the citizens of Floyd County, the E.C.O. Center was included on the 2017 SPLOST ballot for major building renovations. Demolition and construction began November 2023 and is set to be finished late in 2024. When complete, we will have a brand new entrance, classroom space, more exhibit areas, a fresh look, and so much more. We are excited at the growth this will bring to the E.C.O. Center but more importantly the new opportunities that we will be able to offer our community.



ANIMAL EXHIBITS



33
exhibits & habitats

The E.C.O. Center proudly maintained 33 animal exhibits that showcase some of the native wildlife of Northwest Georgia. Many of these animals were used in hands-on educational programs and were the focus for walk-in visitors. Our exhibits and habitats are meticulously maintained on a daily basis by staff & volunteers.



In addition to regular maintenance, the E.C.O. Center made the following additions and improvements:

- 7 new lake sturgeon
- 1 adult + 3 juvenile garter snakes
- Permanent salamander exhibit
- A young spotted bass and mud turtle

Renovations will allow us to enhance and expand our exhibit space!

VOLUNTEERS



6-13
volunteers dedicated

61-80
hours per week

Without a dedicated volunteer base, the E.C.O. Center would not be able to accomplish all of the educational and program goals that it does. Led by our Biologist II and Volunteer Coordinator, Jason Hosford, our volunteers work hard every day to make sure that the animal enclosures and building are neatly maintained and presentable.



The majority of our volunteers are from Berry College and Shorter University, with some work-study students from local high schools. Each year it is an honor to have these students serve alongside us as we strive to also invest in their experiential education. Volunteers are invaluable to the day-to-day operations of the E.C.O. Center and continue to be an excellent extension of the staff.