



# Newsletter



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Carvers Creek State Park

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## How to Stay Found in the Woods

By: Park Naturalist/ Educator

In honor of the Year of the Trail, I thought it would be a good time to talk about some ways you can prepare to enjoy walking in the woods, and the easy steps you can take to be able to relax and enjoy the experience you have while visiting a park or any wild area. The idea for this month came from one of my first bird watching programs, when I had led the group through the woods not far off a large trail. It was an open forest, filled with longleaf pine trees, wiregrass and some small oaks. A beautiful place to look for birds! But after walking for a few minutes, one of the members of the group approached me and quietly asked if we were lost and if I knew how to get everyone back to the parking lot.

I admit, the question took me completely by surprise. Not only were we within a few hundred yards of the parking lot, we were surrounded on all four sides by significant roads or trails that were between a quarter and a half mile away. If you knew where to look, you could see two of them through the trees from where we were standing. I realized I hadn't done a good job understanding the experience level of the group I was leading, so I immediately stopped everyone and talked about where we were, where we were going, and exactly how to find their way back to the parking lot. This month, I wanted to share some of the tips that helped us stay found and that I keep in mind when I'm out on the trails.

### 5 Tips for staying found in the woods

**Know your route and stay on it.**

**Start easy.**

**Pay attention to your surroundings.**

**Tell someone where you are going and when you'll be back.**

**Be prepared.**

The first tip is **Know Your Route and Stay on it**. At Carvers Creek, the best way to know your route is to pick up one of our trail maps, located at the trail heads of the Rockefeller trail at Long Valley Farm and Wiregrass Loop/Longleaf Pine trail at Sandhills, or you can download a copy from our website at <https://www.ncparks.gov/state-parks/carvers-creek-state-park>.

Each trail is marked with a unique "blaze" that you can find about head-height on trees along the trail. Each blaze is a specific shape and color that is only used for that trail in the park. For example, the Longleaf Pine Trail is blazed with white triangles, and the Wiregrass Loop is blazed with blue hexagons (6 sided figures). The blaze shape and color for each trail can be found on the maps at the trail-head or online.

Another technique to help stay on your route is to make notes about major features on the trail. For example, on the Longleaf Pine trail, you can look at the map and see that not long after you pass the second entrance to the Fox Squirrel Loop trail, you will cross Carvers Creek. If instead you don't cross the creek and see the sign marking the Dead End Spur trail, you know you made a wrong turn and can either decide to retrace your steps or continue on the trail and meet back up with the Longleaf Pine trail closer to the parking lot.

Like everything, getting better takes practice so don't be discouraged if you have a hard time visualizing how the trail changes and what to look for. It will take some time to learn the skill, which leads us into the second tip.



Longleaf Pine Trail blaze

### In this issue:

**How to Stay Found in the Woods** 1

**By: Park Naturalist/ Educator**

**This Month's Activities:** 2

**StoryWalk:**  
**"The Lorax**  
**by: Dr. Seuss"**

**First Day Hike**

**Canoe Hikes**

**History Hike**

**Volunteer Day**

**Primitive Fire**

**Snakes**

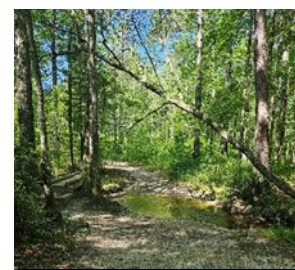
2. **Start easy.** A good rule of thumb is to **plan on 30 minutes to walk a mile on unfamiliar trails.** Even if you are an experienced hiker and outdoors person, if you are in an unfamiliar area, it's best to start small and work up. Check out the shorter trails, learn the sights and sounds of the area and refresh your navigation skills. At Carvers Creek, the Rockefeller Loop and the Wiregrass Loop are great trails to start with. Both are loop trails, meaning you end up where you started without having to turn around, and they are both generally flat and very well marked. Start early enough to finish with plenty of light, come on a dry day (a rainy day can make it hard to see trail blazes or other landmarks), and check the trail map before you go, even if you've been on the trail before!



Carvers Creek and other state parks use signs to help guide visitors

3. **Pay attention to your surroundings.** Sometimes it's hard to disconnect from all the apps, notifications, your tough day at school or work, and all the other ways our day to day lives take our attention. But walking in the woods is special, and it's okay to put those things aside for a little while and enjoy your time outdoors. Plus, paying attention to where you are, where you are going, and where you have been will help keep your mind in the present and can even relieve some of the stress you get from all those other things.

If you are walking on an out-and-back trail (meaning you will have to turn around to come back to the start), remember that the trail will look different on the way back. To help on the return, you can stop every once in a while, and simply turn around and look back the way you came. That will help you recognize where you are on the trail when you come back. Another way to do it is to stop and spend a few minutes looking deeply at a particular plant, tree or really anything that catches your eye. Try to describe it by writing a description of it or, if you don't have a notebook, just describe it out loud to yourself! Both ways will help you recognize it and your location when you see it again on your way back. 4. Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.



Prominent features can help you find your location on a map.

Especially when you are going into a new area, somewhere remote and unfamiliar, it's a good idea to tell someone that you'll be out on the trail hiking and for about how long you'll be gone. A simple text message can suffice, with the name of the park or area you're visiting, the trail you will be walking on and what time you expect to be back. If the friend you tell hasn't heard from you within an hour or so from when you expected to return, they can contact local Rangers or Police/First Responders to be on the lookout.

**To contact a Ranger at Carvers Creek between 8-5, 7 days a week, call the office at 910-436-4681. For emergencies after hours contact the On-Call Ranger at 910-391-0522.**

5. **Be Prepared.** Finally, it's always a good idea to check the weather before you go, wear socks and shoes that will give you support and traction and bring enough water. An unexpected storm or a rock and dirt getting in a pair of flip-flops can be discouraging! As North Carolina moves into a warm and humid summer, it is always important to stay hydrated, and a bottle of water is always a good friend on a walk!

The unfamiliar can seem overwhelming, and for many of us who don't get to spend much time outdoors, being outdoors in the woods can be very overwhelming. But it doesn't have to be! If you follow the tips we talked about this month, enjoying the outdoors will be an easy and fun part of your life.

**June Book Recommendations** for anyone who would like to learn more about nature and the outdoors:

**Swampwalker's Journal: A Wetlands Year** by David Carroll. An interesting book by an accomplished author and artist, detailing his studies in the wetlands and marshes of the Northeast.

**North with the Spring: A Naturalist's Journey Through Spring** by Edwin Way Teale. The author wrote a series of books tracing his journey's across America with the seasons, well worth reading for his observations and love of nature.

If you would like to attend one of our upcoming programs please call 910-436-4681 to reserve your spots.

## **STORYWALK-"THE LORAX BY: DR. SEUSS":**

A StoryWalk® is simply a book and a walking path combined. For the month of June, we will be posting "The Lorax- By: Dr. Seuss". The Story Walk® will be along part of our Rockefeller Loop Trail, an easy 1 mile round trip hike.

## **FIRST DAY HIKE**

**Thursday, June 1<sup>st</sup> @ 7:00 PM**

First Day (of the Month!) Hike: In honor of North Carolina celebrating the Year of the Trail, we will host a First Day of the Month hike every month this year. In June, we will hike part of the Longleaf Pine Trail and learn about the nature and history of the Longleaf Pine trail. We'll meet at 7:00 pm in the Small Parking lot at the Sandhills Access. Please call (910) 436-4681 to sign up.

## **CANOE HIKE**

**Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> @ 6:30 pm**

**Sunday, June 11<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 pm**

We will be learning the basics of canoeing and then trying out our new skills by maneuvering through the Cypress swamp. This is a slow and calm canoeing experience and great for beginners or if you want to get a closer look at the Cypress trees. **YOU MUST SIGN UP.** You can call the park office to sign up. **Limit is 10 visitors. Please allow approximately 15 minutes to walk from the parking lot to the Rain Shelter. Age limit is 8 years old and older.**

## **HISTORY HIKE**

**Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup> @ 2:00 pm**

Join us as we will be walking and exploring the millpond, silos, pavilion, and other historical farm buildings not yet open to the public. Please call or stop by the park office to sign up. Bring a bottle of water, a camera (if you like taking pictures), and your walking shoes! Please meet in front of the park office for this event.

## **VOLUNTEER DAY**

**Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am- 12:00 pm**

Carvers Creek State Park offers a wide variety of opportunities when you come to our Volunteer Days. Our prized volunteers help us with everything from our old farm fences to culverts, to invasive species of plants, to leaf cleanup, trail creation, and many others. Please be prepared for the weather and bring bottled water and gloves with you. We will be meeting at our Long Valley Farm Access, Welcome Center.

## **PRIMITIVE FIRE**

**Saturday, June 24<sup>th</sup> @ 2:00 pm**

Meet up at the Secret Pond and test your fire making skills. After learning to use a ferrous rod, you can try making a one match fire, flint and steel, or really challenge yourself with a friction fire. See if the fire triangle will work in your favor or against you. All ages are welcome.

## **SNAKES**

**Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup> @ 2:00 pm**

Feelings of fear and fascination collide as we learn all about snakes. Come take this opportunity to learn all about snakes, how to identify them, where you can find them, and even get the chance to meet and touch a REAL snake! Call the park office to sign up.