

NC Environmental Education Centers 2025 Professional Development Institute

8:45 – 9:45 Registration and Coffee

9:45 – 10:00 Opening Remarks – Rev. Nick Jeffries, Director, Chestnut Ridge Camp and Retreat Center

NCAEEC Update – Katie Lilly and Marty Wiggins

10:00 – 11:00 Debra Hall, K-5 Science Consultant, Mathematics and Science Office of Teaching and Learning, NC Department of Public Instruction

11:05 – 11:50 Concurrent Sessions:

Telling Our Stories through Interpretive Design (Morris Center)

Tim Rayworth, Interpretive Design Coordinator, NC State Parks

We can't always be present with our visitors, so how do we tell our stories when we're not there? We could display a simple flat sign, or we could build an enormous interactive experience. In this session, we'll look at design in the context of interpretive planning.

State of AWE: Resources on Air, Water and Earth from NCDEQ Educators (Morris Center Annex)

NC Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) uses science to protect human and environmental health in North Carolina. Educators from DEQ have the mission of supporting teachers and students in developing both knowledge and teaching skills. In their State of AWE (Air, Water, Earth) workshop educators from the Division of Air Quality, and Geological Survey share resources and activities to support student's knowledge of an interconnected world.

Citizen Science for EE Centers With Little Time and No Money (Falcon)

Chris Goforth, Head, Collaborative Science, NC Museum of Natural Sciences

There are lots of ways to get involved with collaborative/community/citizen science, even if you have limited staff time and a small budget. You can even add these experiences to programs you are already doing! Learn about some quick and easy ways to get started in collaborative science with projects and resources you likely already have available so you can get started right away.

11:55 – 12:40 – Concurrent Sessions

Prepped and Ready: Strategies for Effective Group Programs (Morris Center)

Kelly Hendrix, Assistant Park Manager of Education, Blue Jay Point and Green Hills County Park, Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Let's learn how to put together successful and fun group programs that can be used with school field trips and homeschool groups. We'll talk about ways to advertise your programs to the public, incorporating NC Essential Standards, practical use of materials, how to evaluate and more. Come with your ideas and questions!

Building Bridges: Strategies for Engaging All Audiences (Morris Center Annex)

Brooke Wilson, Lake Activities Specialist, Greensboro Parks and Recreation, City of Greensboro

This presentation will highlight key techniques for understanding the unique needs, preferences, and communication styles of different groups. Participants will learn how to tailor their programs to resonate across cultural, generational, and social divides, while fostering trust and meaningful engagement.

12:40 – 1:40 – Lunch

During lunch Michele Kloda will lead a popcorn style shared discussion about program successes and flops! Be prepared to share your stories!

1:45 – 2:40 Outdoor Field Excursions

Canoeing on Fellowship Lake: Explore the shoreline of the camp's lake from a kayak or canoe.

Tour Chestnut Ridge Community Farm: Carpool over to the camp's own 20-acre community farm to learn how it serves the camp, community and school groups (2902 Mt. Willing Road, Efland).

Geology Hike: Take a fun and educational afternoon walk with NC DEQ Senior Geologist for Education and Outreach Amy Pitts to explore the geology of the Chestnut Ridge grounds.

2:45 – 3:30 Concurrent Sessions

How You Can Help Build North Carolina's Bird Atlas

CC King, Science Support Specialist, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

The NC Bird Atlas is a survey of the birds in our state that records abundance, distribution and breeding status. This session will discuss how your center and your visitors can use eBird to help gather data especially in rural areas that are underrepresented in the Atlas. Want to engage your visitors in a new adventure waiting just outside the urban limits? Come find out how you can encourage them to participate in the first ever atlas of birds for the entire state.

Organizing Program Supplies with Limited Space and Time (Morris Center Annex)

Krista Roa, Director of Education, Agapé Center for Environmental Education

Krista Roa will share her strategies for organizing program supplies and conquering her biggest enemy - clutter. Her tips will help you consolidate materials, reduce clutter, inventory supplies, and will help you make your program supplies easier to find and more accessible.

Using Artificial Habitats to Enhance Camps and Public Programs

Christine Peckman, Outdoor Education Director and Office Administrator, Chestnut Ridge Camp and Retreat Center

Did you know that North Carolina has more species of salamanders than any other state? We are fortunate to live in an area of the country that is rich in its diversity of our scaly and slimy friends. Artificial habitats offer an exciting way to connect people with reptiles and amphibians, bringing these often elusive creatures closer to our everyday lives with minimum disruption to the ecosystem. They create opportunities for hands-on learning, deepen our understanding of the natural world and encourage us to develop a sense of responsibility toward conservation.