

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Kids in the Creek

It's not very often 8th graders get to see their teacher kiss a fish, however, students from North Carolina's Waynesville Middle School got to see language arts teacher Phyllis Kapsalis pucker up and smack one on a northern hogsucker during a recent trip to the Pigeon River.

Haywood County's Kids in the Creek program gets every public school 8th grader in the county out of the classroom and into the Pigeon River to learn about streams and water quality. The students tag along with biologists collecting fish; collect macroinvertebrates like crayfish; and learn about water chemistry and how land activities can impact water quality. Kids in the Creek was started by the Tennessee Valley Authority, but the idea has been replicated across the Southern Appalachians with Haywood Waterways doing it every year for kids in Haywood County, and the Henderson County Cooperative Extension Service doing it for students there.

Stream conservation is one of the most challenging areas of natural resource protection since a stream can be impacted by any number of events upstream, from someone dumping paint thinner down a storm drain, to a builder not controlling sediment on their construction site, to the runoff from a parking lot being channeled into a stream. Yet stream conservation is also one of the most important areas of natural resource protection given our dependency on clean and plentiful water, something highlighted by the ongoing drought.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.