

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Toe River Valley Festival

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The first toe in the cold water of Yancey County's South Toe River usually brings shrieks among many fifth-graders, but the excitement of getting to wade the river during school keeps them going.

They were enjoying the third-annual Toe River Valley Festival, a four-day educational event that brings nearly every 5th grade student in North Carolina's Yancey County to the South Toe River, while Mitchell County students head to the North Toe River in Spruce Pine.

The students rotated through a number of stations, including a nature hike, art, and a station on watershed health. They also got the chance to grab a net and wade the river to see searching for small animals.

The festival, organized by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Toe River Valley Watch, is one of many events across the mountains that get students outside, exploring rivers. Haywood Waterways recently wrapped up a four day event bringing nearly every eighth-grader in Haywood County to the Pigeon River. Henderson County Cooperative Extension organizes a similar event for students in that county.

Many kids have followed their parents fishing or swimming in these rivers, while for many others the streams are unknown areas. These events provide not only the chance to explore rivers, but also learn a bit about them and hopefully sparking a curiosity that will lead each of them to develop their own relationship with these streams.

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