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Bootcamp for botanists

by Natalie Netzel
Staff Writer

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Bootcamp for botanists is one way to sum up the week long escapade searching for vegetation.

Last week, the Pulse group for the Carolina Vegetation Survey based out of North Carolina explored all around Newberry County looking for all kinds of plant and wildlife species.

The wide and diverse group were specifically targeting endangered and threatened plants.

Under the direction of chair Bob Peet from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the group brought together scientists as well as other botanists interested people to the county to search, scavenge and swat away bugs as they inventory, monitor and assess vegetation.

According to Peet, people from all over and from varying backgrounds came to explore the Enoree district in the Sumter National Forest, Lynch's Woods and Little Mountain.

Scientists gathered from the Carolinas, Alabama, Vermont, Georgia and Tennessee among other places.



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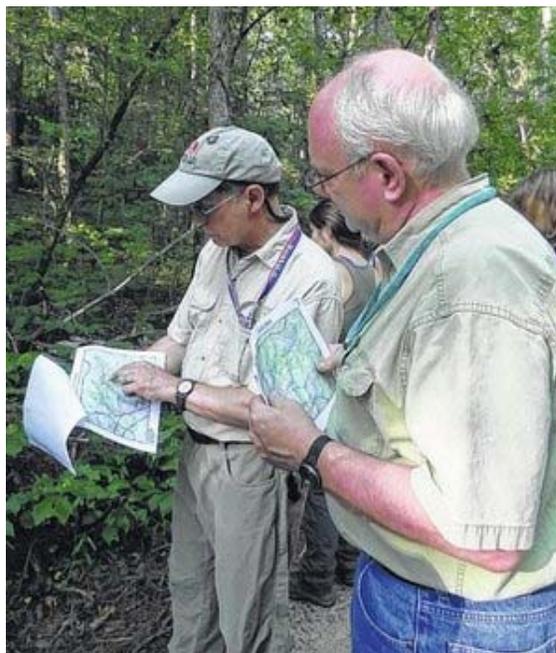
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In Newberry College's dormitories thanks to one of the college's professors who came on board for Pulse.

Biology professor Charles Horn says this is his first year.

He lead a group through Lynch's Woods, an area he knows very well thanks to his research he did regarding the more than 530 species of plants for the Castanea Journal.

In fact, just driving along the path, Horn easily pointed out a rare green, leafy plant known as the paw-paw plant.

The groups are divided up each day at the college before they venture out and at the end of the day they head back to the college to talk about what they have accounted for.

On any given day

The individual groups went out each morning dressed to go trekking and carried with them GPS systems to track the plants as well as cameras to take pictures of what they find. They may also carry paper to keep track of notes.

They established inventory plots to survey. The plots are 20 by 50 meters and each plot is permanently marked so that they may come back to track it.

According to Tom Wentworth with N.C. State, the GPS technology helps them pinpoint exact locations and navigate for future use. For example, they may note climate change effect or an invasion of an exotic species, to name a couple.

Of course, the group always gets permission to put out the plots.



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and determine the diameter of individual trees.

They also collect soil for their test lab. They send it out to a lab out in Ohio.

Each team does at least one plot and maybe two, according to Wentworth.

On the CVS's database, there are about 9,000 plots and the Pulse teams have hit a lot of the Southern Appalachian states and along the east coast of the Carolinas.

This week in Newberry was their second event for the year. The first Pulse event through CVS was along the coastal plain of North Carolina where they were based at East Carolina University.

At the end of the day, the botanists all come together to discuss what they have found and try to identify the unknown species.

If they cannot figure it out, the plants are preserved and examined at another time.

Volunteer driven

The CVS group is largely volunteer driven,

according to Wentworth.

He adds that in the 25 years that CVS has been around, they have had more than a thousand different volunteers.

On this Pulse trip, there were many graduate students which Wentworth points out that this opportunity is a great place to get experience as many professors are involved.

On a local level, Jon Durham with the Tyger-Enoree River Alliance is involved with the Pulse group.

Durham is all about conserving and promoting the Enoree River, as well as the Tyger River, and has been instrumental in getting the word out to the Newberry County area touching the Enoree River, especially in Whitmire where the Sumter National Forest is.



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The group ended their stay this past Friday but they are not through as they plan to keep a check on what they have found.

For more information regarding CVS or TERA, visit their respective websites: www.cvs.bio.unc.edu and www.tygerenoree.com.

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