

Berea College Forestry Outreach Center

at the Pinnacles: Homelands of Shawnee and Cherokee Peoples

2025 Year in Review



2047 Big Hill Rd. Berea, KY 40403

Trails & outdoor restrooms open DAILY, dawn to dusk

FOC hours: Tues.-Sat. 10:00am-4:00pm, Sun. 12:00-4:00pm

We will be closed Dec. 20th-Jan. 5th for winter dormancy...

Thank you to everyone that visited the forest or joined us for an event this year. Please enjoy our highlights from 2025!

Programs and Outreach

The FOC consistently welcomes over 10,000 visitors through our doors each year with the Pinnacles attracting over 100,000 hikers annually. We host hikes and programs, as well as collaborations with community partners and classes. Thank you to all who attended...

***K-12 & College groups
reaching over
900 students***

***Programs/events
with nearly
1,000 participants***

***Group hikes
with over
100 participants***



Nature R&R/Forest Bathing and Forest Meditations

In an increasingly stressful world, it has been an honor to introduce so many people to the restorative power of the natural world this year through a practice I call Nature R&R: relaxation and restoration (also known as forest bathing). As a certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide, I have learned the power of inviting and then allowing our bodies to relax as we remember ourselves as part of the ecosystem. If we have not yet connected, in the coming year I invite you to join me for an hour or two of the most relaxing practice I know. You know you need it!

- Wendy Warren, FOC Director

Learn more on our website under "Choose Your Adventure."



Pinnacle Knob Working Forest Trail

This summer, we celebrated the opening of a new trail system made possible by the hard work and skills of the foresters and horse logging team! Located across the street from the Pinnacles and the FOC, the Pinnacle Knob Trail offers 6.6 miles of repurposed logging roads, meaning wider trails great for trail running or walking side by side with a friend. Along the way, you can find interpretive signs to learn about the watershed, tree identification, sustainable management practices, and more. You can also visit our grove of native American Chestnut trees that we care for in partnership with the American Chestnut Foundation.

Find a map on our website under “Choose Your Adventure.”

Berea’s Biodiversity

“Biodiversity of the Berea College Forest” is a project on iNaturalist.com that is built by citizen science--community-driven data collection of the flora and fauna found here. Hundreds of visitors to the Berea College Forest and our ecologist, John Abrams, have helped document our wildlife, including threatened/endangered species and new state records.

Understanding what is living in the forest and in what abundance is critical for Berea to consciously manage for the health of the ecosystem.

Help contribute to our knowledge of the forest!

Upload any wildlife photos you take while at the Pinnacles, Pinnacle Knob Trails, Brushy Fork, or campus to iNaturalist.org!

4,013

Species identified
to date

(up from 3,764 in 2024)

thanks to

37,594

individual
observations

Citizen Science Projects

Ecologist, John Abrams, launched a citizen science project to track occurrences of box turtles in Kentucky to learn about the populations of this endangered species. Keep an eye out for turtles in 2026 and participate!



Education & Outreach Coordinator, Kayla Zagray, started graduate school project to map roadkill and animal crossings in Berea.

You can make submissions to the survey--there have been over 100 sent in since October!



Campus Earns Arboretum Status

Thanks to the dedicated work of Arborist Michael Barnes, the Berea College campus has earned Arboretum designation. The mission is to develop and maintain a living plant collection that will provide a safe, attractive, educational, and sustainable urban forest that faculty, staff, students can use as a resource for teaching, learning, and enjoyment. Like the campus forest, the Arboretum serves as a living laboratory and outdoor classroom for hands-on, land-based, and project-based learning. Thoughtful maintenance of the campus landscape promotes human health and well-being, improves air quality, mitigates urban heat as it regulates local climate, and provides erosion control as plants help manage stormwater runoff. In the coming year, we invite you to enjoy and appreciate both the forest campus and the campus forest!

Michael works with labor students and the Grounds team to make campus a beautiful place to visit and learn. This year, their team joined FOC staff in working with three classrooms at Berea Community Elementary School to plant trees on their campus to celebrate Tree Week. They also plant dozens of trees on campus per year, keeping the future of Berea's campus forest in mind.

View a map of all of the trees on campus on our website under "Forest Ecosystem."

Celebrate Trees

Current Eastern Kentucky University master's student and Berea College alumnus Andy Beichler ('91) worked with Michael Barnes and the Berea College Art in Action team to create a project that shares the stories of trees on campus. These stories, told by various members of the Berea community, encourage us to think of trees as gifts, not just as natural resources. From the European beech in front of Edwards to the Willow Oak in front of the Alumni Building, this project is a reminder that the trees on campus are just as impactful and influential as any man-made structure. As more permanent signage is placed next semester, you can visit these trees and submit your own stories.

Andy also led a discussion with FOC staff and students about the art of interpretation, which will help inspire upcoming work at the Center. Thanks so much, Andy!

Staff Spotlights

Each student that works at the FOC chooses a project to enhance our educational opportunities for the community or help us learn and care for our ecosystem. Similarly, our staff also work on projects for continued learning. Here are a few examples:



Student, Liz Miller, and summer staff, Charlee Benton, helped lead two sessions of our Forest Neighborhood summer camp! The mornings were full of fun activities exploring different levels of the forest--ground, midstory, and canopy. We also learned about how to be a good neighbor to our forest friends and each other. Stay tuned for a camp next summer!



Jackie Conti

completed the labor student leadership development training and assists with our Sunday family programming!



Maggie Dickson

created a tool for students to explore jobs in the natural sciences. Scan the QR code or view labor students' projects under "About Us".



Spencer Birt earned a certification for stream monitoring through Kentucky Watershed Watch and is planning on sharing his knowledge with us and contribute to statewide stream data!



Zeke Williams led a workshop on refining natural clay and create pottery pieces! He is looking forward to hosting more workshops on clay and natural dyeing for weaving.



Abigail Kingston has worked to collect an impressive native seed library. She is passionate about land restoration and particularly interested in native river cane propagation.



Emma Long is crafting soft and cuddly versions of insects out of crochet that can be used for programming and introduce bugs to folks that might be a little wary of them normally. Stop by the Center to see them!