

## Town Creek Indian Mound Astronomy Program "Under the Stars" this Saturday

After 10 years of bringing citizens closer to the heavens, Town Creek Indian Mound in Mt. Gilead is inviting all to commemorate its first-ever astronomy program hosted 10 years ago. Join in this milestone "Town Creek Under the Stars" program Saturday, Feb. 27, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Winter favorite constellations Aries, Taurus, Gemini and Orion will be on display at one of the last great dark sky sites in the Piedmont.

"It all started with an idea to share an interest in astronomy with the public," says Site Manager Rich Thompson, "that has now become one of our most popular events."

Town Creek Indian Mound was also featured in "Our State" magazine's "10 Places to Enjoy the North Carolina Night Sky."

Other celestial objects, such as nebulas, clusters and galaxies can also be viewed. Interested stargazers are encouraged to dress for the weather. The staff will have a scope available to loan. Advanced registration is requested by calling or emailing the site. This event is free and open to the public but donations are welcome. Please contact the site at 910-439-6802 or at towncreek@ncdcr.gov to register.

For more than 1,000 years, American Indians farmed lands later known as North Carolina. Around A.D. 1000, a new cultural tradition arrived in the Pee Dee River Valley. Throughout Georgia, South Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and western and southern Piedmont North Carolina, inhabitants built earthen mounds for their leaders, engaged in widespread trade, supported craftspeople and celebrated a new religion.

The mission of Town Creek is to interpret the history of the American Indians who once lived here. The visitor center features interpretive exhibits and audiovisual displays. A national historic landmark, Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site is North Carolina's only state historic site dedicated to American Indian heritage. Tour groups are welcome and encouraged. The site is open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, 1-5 p.m. It is closed to the public Mondays and most major holidays.

The historic site is within the Division of State Historic Sites and located at 509 Town Creek Mound Road, Mount Gilead. For more information on Town Creek, please visit [www.towncreekindianmound.com](http://www.towncreekindianmound.com).

## Wildlife Commission Announces District Youth Hunter Skills Tournaments Schedule

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has set the schedule for the 2016 Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournaments, marking the 38th year for the popular statewide, pre-collegiate shooting sports events. The Commission will conduct nine district-level competitions in March, with thousands of middle school and high school students taking part. Teams will compete in rifle, shotgun and archery marksmanship, as well as an orienteering challenge and a wildlife exam.

The 2016 schedule:

- March 5, Chatham Wildlife Club near Bear Creek, Chatham County (District 5)
- March 12, Eastern 4-H Center in Columbia, Tyrrell County (District 1)
- March 12, New Hanover County Law Enforcement Officers Association Range in Castle Hayne, New Hanover County (District 2)
- March 12, Hunting Creek Preserve in Harmony, Iredell County (District 7)
- March 15, Coharie Shooting Range near Clinton, Sampson County (District 4)
- March 19, Rose Hill Farms near Nashville, Nash County (District 3)
- March 19, Lentz Hunter Education Complex near Ellerbe (District 6)
- March 19, Catawba Valley Wildlife Club near Vale, Catawba County (District 8)
- March 19, Polk County Gun Club near Columbus, Polk County (District 9)

Competition is conducted on senior (high school) and junior (middle and elementary schools) divisional levels, with overall team and overall individual awards based on aggregate scores in all events. Teams are organized within public and private schools, while home-schooled students and teams representing organizations, such as 4-H or FFA, also can compete, provided they meet eligibility requirements. Winning teams will advance to the state championship tournament, which will be held at the Millstone 4-H Center near Ellerbe on April 30.

"This type of competition requires discipline and focus," said Tim Lemon, state shooting sports coordinator for the Commission. "These young folks have that and more and we wish them all the best of luck. We'd also like to thank them, along with their parents, coaches and schools for their support and involvement in hunter education and shooting sports."

While the Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournaments are for students 18 years old and younger, the Commission offers free hunter education courses throughout the state for all ages. For more information on this or other conservation programs for youth, visit [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

## Local Food Drive Celebrates Annual Small Farms Week

Anson County Cooperative Extension together with NC A&T University is conducting a local food drive through March 11. The food drive is in conjunction with the 30th Annual Small Farms Week celebration, March 20-26. Designated to benefit local communities, all food collected as part of the Anson County drive will be donated to Harvest Ministries of Anson County for their Helping Hands Food Pantry.

Anyone interested in donating to this worthy project can drop off their non-perishable food items at the Anson County Cooperative Extension Center, located at 501 McLaurin Street in Wadesboro, from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. during the drive.

For each item donated donors can write their names on ag decals that will be posted through the lobby and front entrance of the building. Sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Program at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Small Farms Week pays tribute to the state's small-scale growers.

By expanding the scope of this year's observance to include a food drive, Cooperative Extension acknowledges farmers' indisputable contribution to the health and economy of North Carolina.

In addition, the food drive recognizes the incidence of food-insecurity in our counties, state and nation, and underscores the outreach and impact of Cooperative Extension's statewide and national network.

All 100 counties and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians are collaborating with N.C. A&T by collecting canned and non-perishable food items. This project is also in keeping this year with the 125th anniversary of N.C. A&T's founding in 1891.



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*Pictured from left to right on the front are: Heather Hicks, COTA; Jessica Price, PTA; Barbara Webb, PTA; Jordan Randall, COTA; and Eunice Salvino, PT.  
On the back row are: Melanie Knight, DOR; Nicole Burch, SLP; and Brooke Blalock, COTA.*

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