

NAGS HEAD

2020-2021 Annual Report

TOWN OF KILL DEVIL HILLS

SEPTEMBER 2021

The Nature
Conservancy 
North Carolina

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ATTACHMENT CA-4A

COVID-19

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) closed all offices in late March 2020. Though plans are being put in place for “soft openings” in some offices, the Nags Head Woods (Preserve) administrative and indoor visitor facilities remain closed for safety of staff and visitors. Staff continue to do most work remotely and on site to maintain stewardship, visitor services, research and restoration projects to the best and safest standards possible.

Visitor Management during COVID

Preserve signage and the outdoor information counter provide onsite direction and outreach to visitors.

We continue to offer a portable toilet at the parking area for visitor use.

Staff created Google Business , Trip Advisor ,and AllTrails accounts to address Preserve visitation inaccuracies with popular online sources.

Email and telephone visitor inquires receive prompt response from staff.

Socially distant visitor interactions continue to occur when staff are doing stewardship activities on the Preserve.



Preserve Visitation

Trail Counters

Six Infrared trail counters were installed in January 2021. The chart below shows data collected the first half of calendar year 2021. Prior to the trail counters, our only means of estimating visitation was a sign in book at the outdoor information kiosk. Based on the sign in data, we had been estimating visitation at about 10,000 per year.

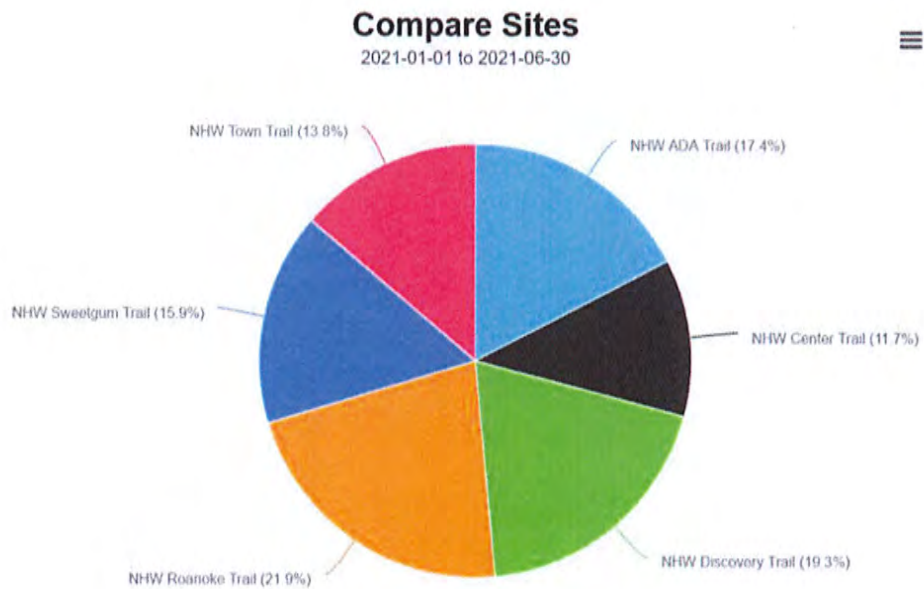
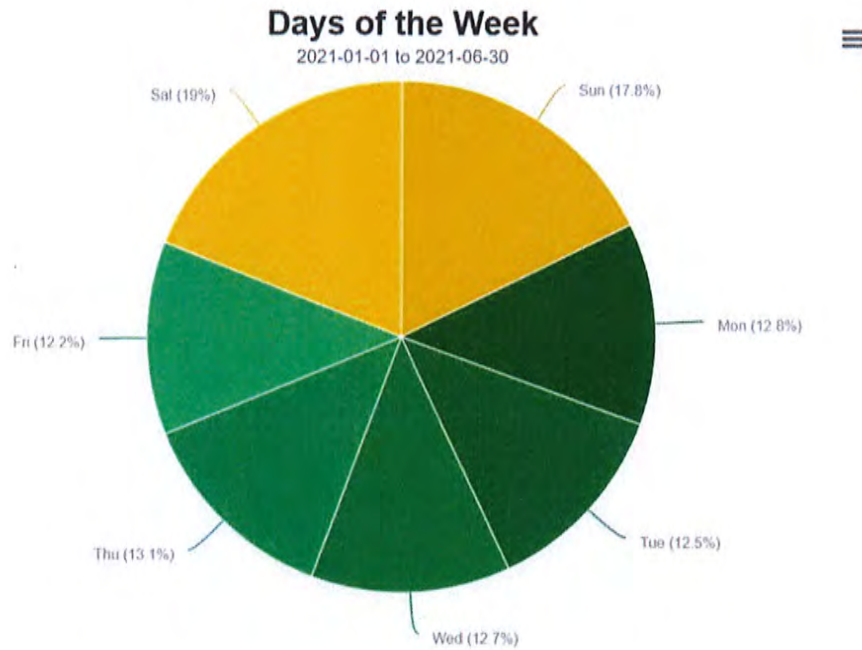
Month	ADA Trail	Center Trail	Discovery Trail	Roanoke Trail	Sweetgum Trail	Town Trail	TOTAL
2021-01-0	1171	869	1450	1446	1192	1372	7500
2021-02-0	941	656	1015	1049	861	1024	5546
2021-03-0	1490	597		1993	1379	1275	6734
2021-04-0	1622	1	1870	2379	1563	1277	8712
2021-05-0	1409	1681	1798	1785	1193	731	8597
2021-06-0	998	1349	1009	954	776	371	5457
							42546



Preserve Visitation

Trail Counters

The counters have also provided new insights on how the trails are used. Overall, we were surprised that use was so even across days of the week and individual trails.



Preserve Visitation

Facilities Improvements

Taking advantage of office and visitor reception closures, staff coordinated significant improvements to our aging buildings.

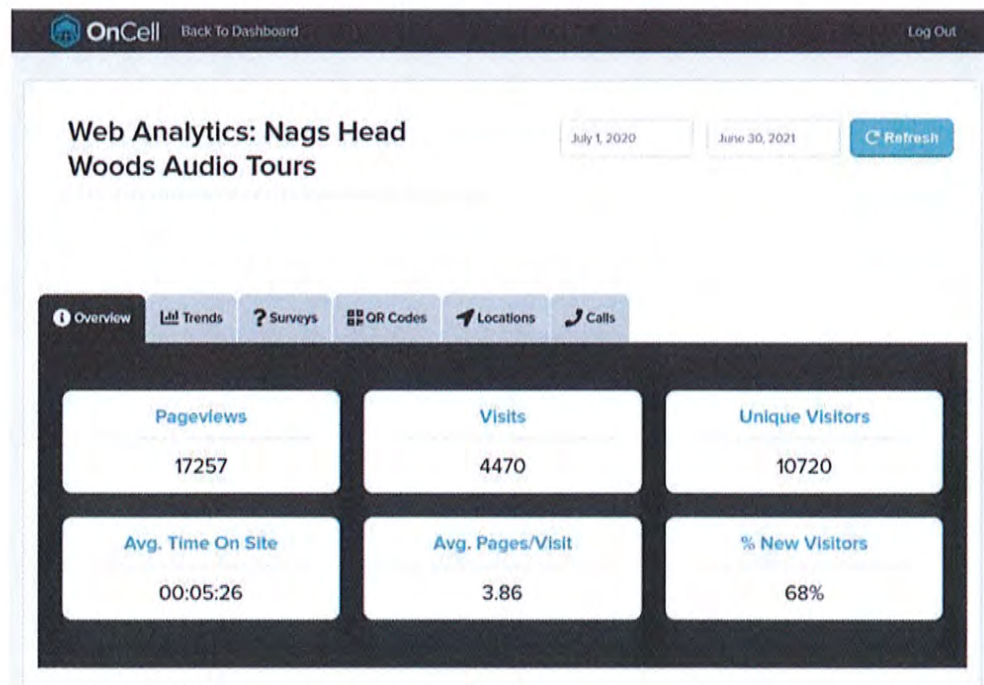
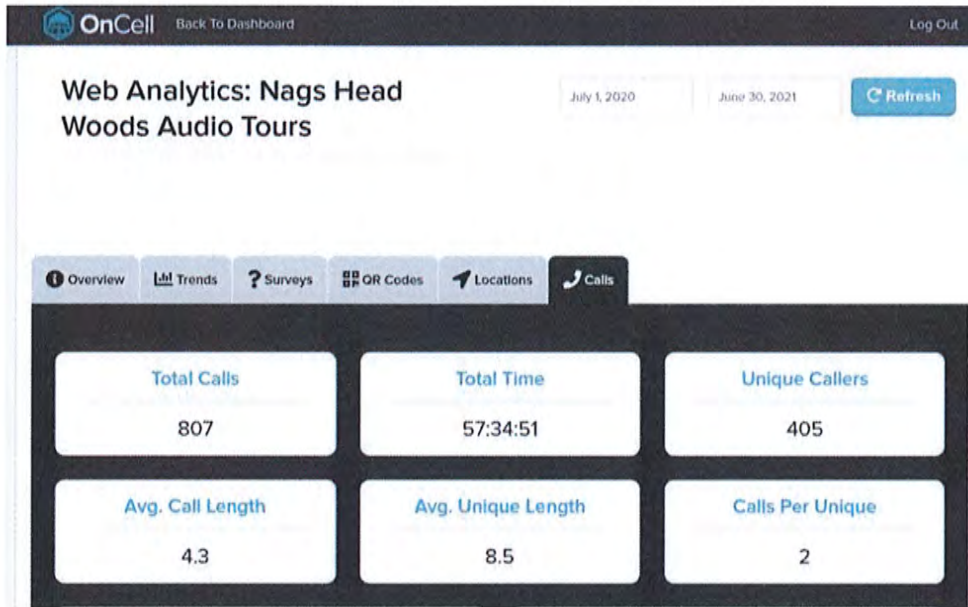
- New shingles were put on the visitor/administrative and pavilion buildings.
- Portions of exterior walls were improved for security and better visitor entrance.
- Floors and office furnishings were replaced.
- Fresh paint was applied and various small remodeling projects were completed.
- An interior door leading to administrative offices was installed for staff safety.



Preserve Visitation

“The Land Speaks: Stories of Nags Head Woods” Audio Tour

Connecting visitors with voices from the 19th and 20th century community in Nags Head Woods, the audio tour continues to have high usage and positive feedback. The first chart summarizes annual dial-in access, the second is QR code access.



Partnerships, Volunteers, Community

Due to COVID and TNC facility closures, nearly all partner and volunteer events were cancelled in fiscal year 20-21.

Staff were able to host a fall student volunteer from East Carolina University's Coastal Studies Institute (photo left).

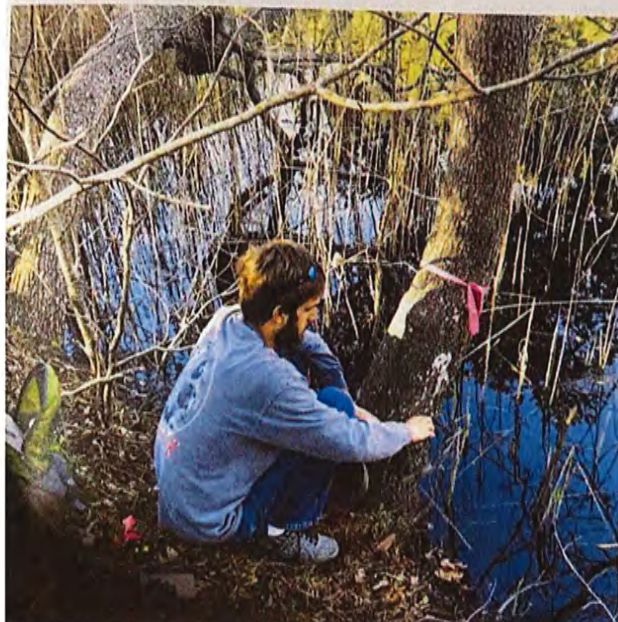


In addition, a First Flight high school student volunteered throughout much of the school year. (photo below from school yearbook).

Each volunteer had both virtual and outdoor tasks to gain experience in the field of conservation.

Crouching to secure a camera, senior Aaron Jones does internship work in Nags Head Woods. "I was setting up a trail camera to capture pictures of local wildlife for the Nature Conservancy under Jennifer Gilbreath and Aaron McCall," Jones said. "I started my internship in the fall of 2020 and enjoyed it so much I have continued on as a volunteer. In addition to this, I also maintain the trails and remove non-indigenous plant life."

Photo submitted by Aaron Jones



Partnerships, Volunteers, Community



Rhana Paris, NC Aquarium Outreach Coordinator, giving a "Maritime Forest Ecosystem" virtual program at Nags Head Woods. Her audience was 170 middle school students from locations in Canada, Georgia, Illinois, South Carolina and Minnesota.

Kill Devil Hills residents (and sisters) enjoy views and a walk on the ADA Trail.



Partnerships, Volunteers, Community

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

The Nature Conservancy developed a partnership with [Rivian](#), an electric vehicle company.

Two charging stations have been installed at the Nags Head Woods parking area. COVID has caused manufacturing and shipping delays but we hope to have full functionality before end of calendar year.

Due to parking limitations, these two spaces will be open to all vehicles.



Conservation, Management and Biology

Invasive plant control

This work is constant during the warmer months. Failure to control invasive plants would result in critical changes to Nags Head Woods ecosystem. **Unfortunately, many of these species are commonly sold at local landscape and big box stores. Please encourage residents not to plant these species.**



Russian Olive: controlled by hand cutting and herbicide; a popular ornamental sold extensively at local stores is brought in by birds, unknowing hikers and vehicles. Photo above is Russian Olive cut out of the Preserve to be hauled offsite before it goes to seed.

English Ivy: controlled by hand cutting and herbicide; also a popular ornamental brought in by birds, hikers and vehicles. Some English Ivy may have been planted by members of the Nags Head Woods community in the 18th and 19th century and by the company that had planned to develop the Woods in the 1970's.

Japanese Stilt Grass: controlled by herbicide; is especially difficult to control because it comes in with the gravel for the roadways. It can form massive swaths of ground cover vegetation quickly.

Oriental bittersweet: controlled by hand cutting and herbicide; once a popular ornamental brought in by birds. It can form massive swaths of heavy cover in trees quickly.

Help us spread the word to [GO NATIVE in your yard](#) to help Nags Head Woods stay healthy!
NC State Extension will show you how at the link.

Conservation, Management and Biology



Updated Species List of Animals

For the birding enthusiasts, we reorganized the bird list to match common international standards.

Several newly documented species were added for a total of 240 animals.

Deer Management

Since 1995 we have coordinated with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to manage the Nags Head Woods deer population through a registered bow hunt. Hunters are required to have a current North Carolina hunt permit, attend an orientation session at Nags Head Woods, complete registration forms including vehicle information, pay a \$50 fee, display a registration card in their vehicle while hunting and complete a year-end survey.

The bow hunt helps manage the deer population to alleviate nutritional stress and lessen the probability of further declines in deer herd health. Only deer and coyotes are allowed to be hunted.

The bow hunt offers affordable, important heritage and consumptive recreation for local citizens who hunt. Many hunters provide important feedback about the Preserve by letting us know what they see while hunting. This year approximately 600 hours were reported in the year-end hunt survey with four deer harvested.

About 30 hunters registered for the regular bow hunt season ran from September 2020 to January 1, 2021. The [Urban Archery Season](#) closed in February 2021.

Conservation, Management and Biology

The Bear of 2021

The trail cameras picked up several videos of the young bear that lived at the Preserve during summer and fall of 2020. Staff [provided information](#) for local and regional media that included precautionary measures to deter bear interactions.

[View the clips here.](#) To our knowledge, the bear was not seen by visitors or staff. The bear was last documented on the Preserve in early October and has not returned.



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Municipal Funding Opportunities

[NC Land and Water Fund](#) and [Parks and Recreation Trust Funds](#) are slated to receive significant budget increases over current and next fiscal years.

Towns can seek these funding programs to invest in meaningful lasting public access to open spaces and the outdoors.

*We are very grateful for the Town of Kill Devil Hills's support both this year and in past years.
Please contact us for additional information, questions and feedback.*



Beautiful purple mushroom (*Gymnopus icephalus*) nestled in partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*)