Making Connections

① Flowers and Pollinators

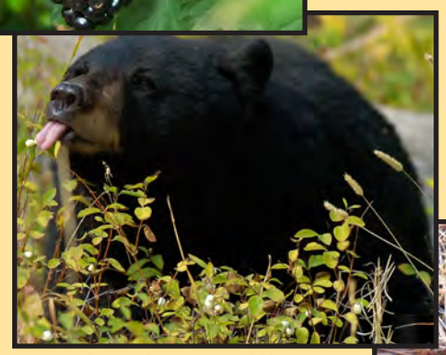
In spring, blackberry plants begin to flower. The flower's smell, size and colors attract a variety of pollinators such as bees, moths and butterflies. The pollinators relationship with flowers can easily be seen as you walk along the trail.

② Flowers become Fruit

Many flowers depend on pollinators to reproduce. Pollinated blackberry flowers develop into tasty fruits. If you look closely, you can see the tips of the flower (called anthers) poking out of the blackberries.

③ Berry Berry Good - Fertilizer

Some plants depend on relationships with animals to disperse their seeds. Not only do animals such as birds, foxes, and black bears love the taste of blackberries, but their scat (poop) provides the seeds with a pocket of fertilizer in which to grow.



④ Nature's Recyclers

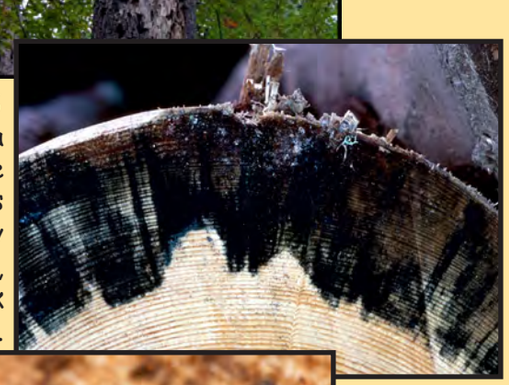
All plants depend on decomposers such as fungi (mushrooms) to recycle valuable nutrients back into the soil. Along this trail a variety of fungi can be found decomposing everything from scat to leaf litter to fallen trees.

⑤ Tree Trials

Trees rely on decomposers to unlock the nutrients they need to be healthy. However, sometimes certain conditions cause trees to become weak. Unhealthy trees are vulnerable to attack from parasites and will eventually be decomposed by fungi.

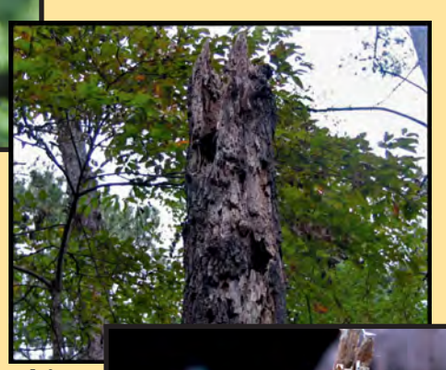
⑥ Deadly Relationships

When bark beetles bore into a pine tree they bring the blue stain fungi with them. Later, as bark beetle larvae develop, they feed on the fungi. Together, they act as a parasite and attack the tree's circulation... killing it.



⑦ Dead Trees: Good?

Dead trees, called snags, can provide for more life than living trees. This is because many types of insects live inside dead trees providing a valuable food source for animals such as woodpeckers and bears.



⑧ Open... Canopy

When dead limbs and trees fall to the forest floor it opens the canopy. This allows more sunlight to reach understory plants such as blackberries.

In this brochure, only a few of the relationships found along the trail were discussed. Many more relationships are present. How many can you find? Here are some others you can search for:

I Lichen You!

Some fungi and algae "lichen" each other and help each other survive. Fungi protect algae from adverse conditions and in exchange the algae provide the fungi with food.

Killing Trees Softly

The tiny tufts of "cotton" you see on the underside of hemlock leaves are actually the egg sacs of the hemlock wooly adelgid. These parasites suck the "phloem" (food) out of the tree, killing it.

People and Nature

We also have a relationship with nature. When you go to the market to buy an apple, remember that the apple was once a flower pollinated by insects. Your home, constructed of wood, rock, or brick, came from items harvested from nature. Take the time to slow down and experience your natural world. And remember, everything in nature is connected... even us!

TRACK and KIP want You to become a Trail TRACKer

Thank you for joining us on the trail today. We want you to join the Trail **TRACK**er Team. It's fun, healthy and free. Best of all, you can earn prizes by walking TRACK Trails and TRACKing them on our website. For more information about the Trail TRACKer Team, other TRACK Trail adventures near you, or for general information about the **Kids in Parks** program, please visit our website at:

www.kidsinparks.com

The TRACK Trail program is part of the larger **Kids in Parks** initiative sponsored by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. Working together with partners throughout the community, our mission is to increase physical activity of children and their families, to improve nutritional choices, and to get them outdoors and along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Nature's Relationships:

Everything's connected

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."
-John Muir

This TRACK Trail adventure will lead you on a 1.2 mile loop. This brochure will not guide you to specific locations, but rather tells a story to help you discover nature's relationships all along the trail.