

## Remember, Everything's Connected

Only a few of the relationships found along the trail were discussed in this brochure. Since everything's connected, many more relationships are present. How many more can you find? Here are some others you can search for:



### Dead Trees: Good?

Dead trees, called snags, can often 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. As dead trees decompose, they release their nutrients back into the soil for use by future generations of plants and trees, thus completing the cycle.

### Indicators of Health

Frogs and salamanders have such an extremely close relationship with nature that they are considered indicator species. Because many species of frogs and salamanders "breathe" through their skin, their presence in a stream indicates that the stream is healthy. As you walk along Venrick Run, look for these important animals. Based on your observations, do you think Venrick Run is a healthy stream?



### People and Nature

The Crystal Springs Recreation Area is a prime example of our relationship with nature and how it evolves over time. In the 1930's, Crystal Springs Reservoir was used as a supplemental water source for the Town of Wytheville. The water pipe leaving the reservoir can still be seen at the outlet. Today, Crystal Springs is still meeting the needs of the community by providing people the opportunity to recreate and connect more meaningfully with nature.



**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 **TRACKer** Team. It's fun, healthy and free. Best of all, by keeping **TRACK** of your trails on our website, you can earn prizes. 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](http://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 and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. Working together with the Town of Wytheville's Parks and Recreation Department and the Wythe-Bland Community Foundation, our mission is to increase physical activity of children and their families, improve their nutritional choices and get kids outdoors.

*Kids in Parks...*

*for the Health of our Kids, our Communities and our Mountains.*



Town of Wytheville's Crystal Springs Recreation Area **TRACK** Trail Partners



Overall Kids in Parks Program Partners



Wytheville's Crystal Springs Recreation Area



# 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*



Although this brochure will not guide you to specific locations along the trail, it will tell you a story to help you discover some of the relationships found here. Use the pictures and text to locate as many of these relationships as you can. Keep your eyes open and have fun.

### Guiding Pollinators

Many flowers depend on relationships with pollinators to reproduce. A flower's size, shape, color and smell attracts unique pollinators. Some flowers, such as the flowers of rhododendrons, have nectar guides that are visible to insects through ultraviolet light. These guides act as road signs, directing pollinators to the flower's sweet nectar.



How many types of flowers can you find?



How many pollinators can you find?



Can you find a spider on its web?

### Caught in the Web of Life

On their daily journeys to find food, many flying insects get caught in the web of life - the spider's web that is. A spider's web is not its home, but a trap for its food. Like snowflakes, each web a spider makes is different.



Can you spot a bird's nest in a tree?



Find a lichen growing on a stick or rock?

### Connecting Nature's Building Materials

Not only do many bird species eat spiders, some depend on their webs to build their homes. Many species of hummingbird construct their nests by connecting spider webs and lichens. They use the sticky spider webs to weave materials together and to anchor their nests to the tree's branch. Spotting a hummingbird's nest in a tree is tricky since they're about the size of a golf ball.



Smell a wildflower.

### Making Connections

We are an intricate part of nature's relationships. Our actions affect everything, from the bees that pollinate our flowers and food crops to the soil we walk on as we hike through the forest. During your hike today, take your time, stop to smell a flower and...

## Get Connected

### I Lichen You!

Some fungi and algae "lichen" each other and help each other survive. In this relationship, the fungus protects the algae from adverse conditions, and in exchange the algae provides the fungus with food. This is an example of mutual symbiosis (when two different organisms help each other survive).



How many types of mushrooms can you find?



Feel the sun beaming through the trees.



Can you spot trees with storm damage?

### A Healthy Home

Mountain forests are home to a variety of plants that require different amounts of nutrients, water and sunlight. Each plant finds its preferred home among the slopes, valleys, peaks and streamsides. Sometimes though, even the perfect forest home can be suddenly changed by the weather.



Can you find a vista of the forest?



Can you find any mycelium?



Can you find a "Turkey Tail" fungi?

### Fungi Feed Forests

Fungi help break down and decompose everything in the forest, from dead trees and fallen logs to leaf litter. After decomposing fallen logs and leaf litter, fungi feed the forest. Fungi have large, underground networks of "roots" called mycelium that attach themselves to the roots of plants and trees, helping to deliver valuable nutrients to the forest.