

# Drawn OUTDOORS

**A WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA GROUP'S YOUTH CONSERVATION DAY HAS PROVEN SO POPULAR AND SUCCESSFUL, OTHER AREAS ARE USING THIS MODEL TO CREATE AND HOLD THEIR OWN SIMILAR EVENTS.**

**SCOTT HOGSED WOULD HAVE LOVED IT.  
DUSTIN ROBERSON WOULD'VE HAD A BLAST.**

For the third consecutive year, Freddy Cook's farm in Brasstown became an outdoors festival, not to mention a luncheon cafeteria and Civil War battlefield, as the site for the Scott Hogsed Memorial Youth Conservation Day. Here in the westernmost corner of North Carolina, between Hayesville and Murphy, 1,450 folks participated in this special event in August 2007, including more than 500 young people.

The event is scheduled for Aug. 23 this year at the same location. And the fun is apparently contagious: An additional event, based on the Hogsed model, just took place in Guilford County in May. Organizers would like to see the idea spread across the state. Already, other youth organizations have consulted with the Hogsed organizers on future possibilities or to help fine-tune existing events.

**WRITTEN BY GEOFF CANTRELL  
ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID TERRY**

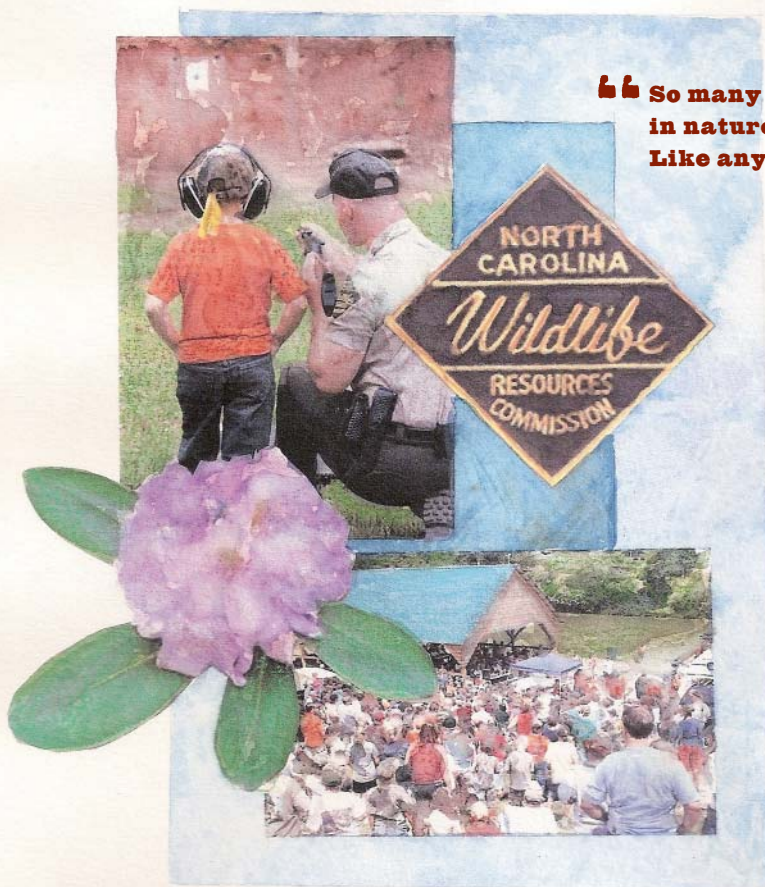
**A successful western North Carolina youth conservation day event is named in memory of Scott Hogsed (far left).**

"We're willing to help others anywhere in the state who would like to hold similar events that highlight hunting, fishing and related recreation," said Richard Conley, a founding organizer. "We think it's a great thing and worth sharing."

It all began when some hunters, anglers and youth group leaders in far western North Carolina decided to try and get kids away from video games and television to show them the beauty and opportunities of the outdoors. They decided to hold an annual event that would showcase a variety of activities, presented by experts, with an emphasis on fun and safety. And, after months of planning, wrangling and donations, Youth Conservation Day was born in 2005 with a special namesake.

Scott Hogsed was an enthusiastic, energetic 14-year-old who spent as much time as he could hunting and fishing. He lost his life in a vehicle accident returning from a camping trip in 1984. "There's no better tribute to Scott and his life than this event," said his older brother Sam, an event organizer. "He would have loved everything about this."





“So many young people today don’t spend any quality time in nature, and I don’t think it’s from a lack of interest. Like anything else, you just need a proper introduction.”

— Richard Conley, event organizer

Freddy Cook agreed. “Oh, it was the best event yet,” he said. Besides being an organizer, he provides use of his family farm for the event, which involves extra mowing and maintenance duties. “I think this was the best group of kids, though they’ve all been outstanding. You didn’t see any bad behavior. Trash went into trash cans and there was no trouble whatsoever. And I think we as organizers have learned, too. We’ve gotten lots of compliments but even better, we’ve gotten lots of folks asking to volunteer and help with next year’s event.”

The National Wild Turkey Federation had perhaps the largest outreach effort, with members of the Pisgah, Nantahala and Smoky Mountain chapters present. They had a JAKES presentation (the federation youth program Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics and Sportsmanship — and also the name for young male turkeys), a shoot-don’t-shoot safety exhibit, a demonstration of how disabled sportsmen can successfully hunt with use of an automated hunting platform, and an interactive exhibit that highlighted the recovery of wild turkeys in America. Members also assisted with a new activity for the older teens, a skeet shooting range.

“It’s a community effort and hard work,” said Gene Piver, an organizer and a local leader with National Wild Turkey Federation. “But dang, you see these smiling faces and you know it’s worth it.”

“I know what it meant to me to get outdoors when I was young, and I know what it means to these kids to have this opportunity,” he said. “Sportsmen have to consider this. Remember who introduced you to hunting or shooting, fishing, boating, camping or what have you, and then ask yourself, who have you introduced to what you love about the outdoors?”

Other participating sponsors included:

- Smoky Mountain Sportsmen Association
- Mountain Country Rod and Gun Club
- Harmony Grove Baptist Church
- Sportsmen’s Ministry

- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- U.S. Forest Service
- Boy Scouts of America
- N.C. Cooperative Extension Service
- Hiawassee River Bass Club
- Trout Unlimited
- North Carolina National Guard
- U.S. Marine Corps League
- Martins Creek Fire Department
- Cherokee County EMS

An outstanding living history demonstration — and the dramatic moment of the day — came from the Civil War skirmish re-enactment, with cannons blasting and muskets blazing. Later, youth were able to talk with the authentically uniformed and outfitted re-enactors from Walker “H” Company about life in the 1860s, battlefield conditions and the rapid changes in military technology of that era.

For Tanya Poole, a wildlife program coordinator with the Wildlife Commission, the attention span and degree of interest by pre-teens was impressive. “It was heartening to see so many kids in one place being so respectful,” she said. “Everyone had such good manners and listened and learned. They understood the balance between predators and prey, the realistic view of animals in the wild and had wonderful, insightful questions.”

A firing range provided by the commission offered youth an opportunity to meet wildlife officers and, under their individual guidance, shoot pellet rifles or .410 shotguns at paper targets. “Some of these kids have never seen, much less held and fired a gun,” said Darrin Ball, the hunter education specialist for the region. “The safety message is a big thing for us, whether they decide to take up hunting or sport shooting or not. The parents here today have been really supportive and the kids obviously enjoyed it.”

Activities halted, sometimes reluctantly, for a wild game lunch, complete with buffalo burgers, venison, bear roast, frog legs and trout fillets. The day concluded with prize drawings, giveaways and distribution of take-home gift bags.

Finishing touches and final details are being worked out for the fourth annual Scott Hogsed Memorial Youth Conservation Day. The Guilford County event, held in May at Northeast Park, had a successful launch. About 140 youth enjoyed firearm safety training, archery, BMX, turkey calling, bird dog

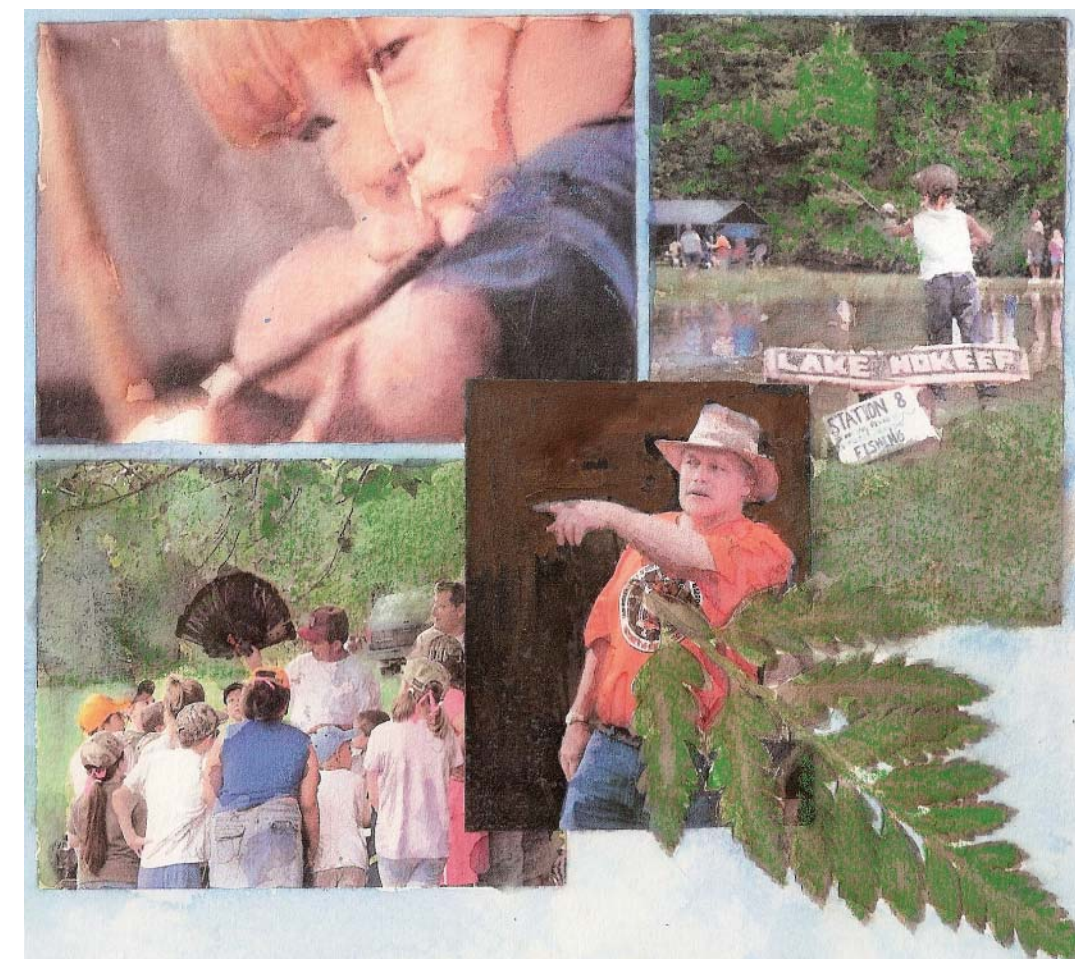
demonstrations, ATV safety training, fishing and more. The 2009 event is scheduled for May 16. In addition, the Wildlife Commission used the Hogsed model to plan its National Hunting and Fishing Day Wildlife Expo scheduled for Sept. 27 at the John E. Pechmann Fishing Education Center at Lake Rim outside Fayetteville. More than 20 outdoor-related activities, demonstrations and exhibits are planned. For more details, visit [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

“I think just about every community in the state has the opportunity to do something like this,” Gene Piver said. “And we’d like to see them do it.”

*Geoff Cantrell is a public information officer with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

on the Scott Hogsed Memorial Youth Conservation Day, or for information on how to conduct a similar event in your area, contact Shannon Coleman of the Cherokee County Cooperative Extension Service at (828) 837-2210 or Richard Conley at (828) 321-5397.



Lots of quality instruction from wildlife enforcement officers, educators and other adults on many outdoor topics and activities makes the Hogsed event very popular among kids in western North Carolina.