



PRESS RELEASE – *for immediate release*

August 4, 2026

Highlands Biological Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHO: Highlands Biological Foundation
WHAT: Highlands Nature Center to Temporarily Close for Renovations
Beginning August 16
WHERE: Highlands, NC
PHOTOS: Nature Center photos by Maddie Wikstrom

(HIGHLANDS, NC) — The Highlands Nature Center, a beloved community destination for environmental education and discovery, will temporarily close beginning August 16, 2026, as it undergoes a series of important preservation and improvement projects designed to protect the historic building and enhance its long-term sustainability.

For nearly a century, the Highlands Nature Center has connected residents and visitors to the remarkable biodiversity of the Southern Appalachians. Founded in 1927 as the museum of the Highlands Biological Station, the Nature Center is housed in the historic Clark Foreman Museum building, a Works Progress Administration (WPA) structure constructed between 1939 and 1941 using native granite and salvaged wormy chestnut.

The renovation project, scheduled to begin in mid-August and continue through late fall, will focus on three primary areas:

- Replacing aging chestnut support columns along the exterior walls with structural metal beams while preserving the building's historic appearance by incorporating the original chestnut columns into the finished interior design.
- Installing new energy-efficient windows throughout the building. The windows will feature bird-friendly etched glass designed to reduce bird collisions, a leading cause of bird mortality in North America.

- Protecting the building from water intrusion through foundation sealing and site improvements, including grading adjustments around the building and rear parking area to improve drainage.

The Nature Center will remain open through Saturday, August 15, operating on its regular summer schedule of Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to stop by and enjoy the exhibits before construction begins.

While the building will be closed during renovations, the Nature Center grounds will remain open to the public. Educational programming will continue through outreach initiatives, outdoor programs, and events held at the Sto Pavilion and across the Highlands Biological Station campus. Additional details about fall programming will be announced in the coming weeks.

Visitors should also note that the rear parking lot will close before construction begins to accommodate project preparations.

These improvements represent an investment in preserving a beloved Highlands landmark while ensuring the Nature Center can continue serving residents and visitors for generations to come.

The Highlands Nature Center is part of the Highlands Biological Station, a multi-campus center of Western Carolina University. The Nature Center, educational programs, and public outreach initiatives are operated and funded by the Highlands Biological Foundation, whose mission is to support research, education, and conservation in the Southern Appalachian region.

The Nature Center is expected to reopen in early 2027 following completion of the renovation project.

For updates and information about upcoming programs, visit the Highlands Biological Station website or follow their social media channels.

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